



# ROSALEEN O'HARA

JOSEPH HOCKING

S. Hawkins





ROSALEEN O'HARA

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

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# ROSALEEN O'HARA

## A ROMANCE OF IRELAND

BY

JOSEPH HOCKING

AUTHOR OF

THE TRAMPLED CROSS," "THE WILDERNESS," "THE JESUIT," ETC.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
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## CHAPTER I

### BOYHOOD

THE characteristics which were destined to take such a great part in the shaping of Denis Tregony's career began to reveal themselves while he was yet very young. When he was not ten years old he saw a big lad bullying a little one. Without considering the almost certain results of his interference, he rushed forward, and, calling the big lad a coward, demanded that he should leave the little lad alone, and fight one who was a match for him. At this, the big lad, Bill Barnicoat by name, gave a hoarse laugh, and transferred his attention to Denis. A few minutes later Denis went home in a most pitiable condition. His nose was bleeding, his right eye was rapidly closing, and he felt strangely dizzy. Most likely his condition would have been worse still, for Denis would not acknowledge himself beaten, but it happened that a man who knew him passed by during the unequal battle and put an end to it.

"But I was just beginning to lick him, Mr. Richards," spluttered Denis. "He—he is a big bully and a coward. Why, he was beating little Ben Bennetts, and if—if you had let me alone, I—I would have——"

At this Bill Barnicoat gave another great, hoarse laugh. Bill was the butcher's son, and two years older than Denis. He was a head taller too, and a score pounds heavier.

"Iss, what wud 'ee 'ave done?" said Bill. "Why, I cud bait 'ee with my little vinger."

"You wait till there's no one to interfere," sobbed Denis, "and I'll let you know."

"You'd better go to John Curra and oader yer coffin afore you do tackle me again," replied Bill, who thought it wise to get away quickly.

"I—I would have licked him, Mr. Richards," he explained to the man who had interfered and who was accompanying him to his home.

"Doan't you tackle Bill again till you've put on a bit more weight," remarked Mr. Richards.

"More weight?" queried Denis.

"Yes, more weight—more boan and more zinneys" (sinews).

"How can I do that?" asked Denis eagerly.

"Ait a lot and wrastle a lot," replied Mr. Richards.

"You're not going home with me?" queried Denis at length.

"Think I'd better go and explain," replied Mr. Richards, "else yer mawther or yer father might give 'ee another lickin'."

"But I wasn't licked," cried Denis.

"Aw, wasn't 'ee? Anyhow, I'd better tell yer mawther 'bout et."

Mr. Richards kept a small farm, and he was anxious to keep on the right side of Mr. and Mrs. Tregony, who farmed Trewint, the best farm in Probus parish. Moreover, he was the kind of man who always wanted to keep himself in evidence.

"He is a bully and a coward," sobbed Denis, "and I mean to lick him for putting upon poor little Ben Bennetts."

"You'll 'ave 'nough to do before you've been to Probus School long, ef you do fight every big boy that do put 'pon a little wawn," remarked Mr. Richards.

From that day Denis did not like Mr. Richards. He felt that the farmer wasn't a sportsman, and couldn't understand how a proper boy should behave.

Four years later, when Denis had grown into a long, lean boy, between fourteen and fifteen, he had occasion to tackle Bill Barnicoat again. Bill was still bigger and stronger than Denis, although no taller. But he had grown into an awkward, heavy-footed fellow, and this time Denis gave him a sound thrashing.

"I told you I would," said Denis as he helped Bill on with his jacket. "And I tell you this too: every time you tackle a little chap, I'm going to lick you. I'm going to keep my eye on you for that purpose."

"They do larn 'ee boxin' to the school," said Bill, "or you cudden a-licked me."

"I've given you a lesson not to bully little boys, anyhow," remarked Denis loftily, and he went toward Trewint Farm with his head high in the air.

Another incident of his boyhood strongly revealed the nature of the lad. This time it took place in the school where he went as a day-boy. His form master had insisted on Denis and some other boys doing something, the nature of which need not be mentioned here, for it has no direct bearing on my story. The other boys obeyed him without question, but Denis refused.

"You refuse, Tregony?" cried the form master.

"Certainly, sir," replied Denis.

"Perhaps you'll be good enough to explain why before I punish you," said the master."

"Because it's not fair," replied the boy.

"It's perfectly fair," was the reply.

"Prove it to be fair, and I'll do it," cried Denis, "but not otherwise."

The master looked at the boy in astonishment. It was a rule of the school that boys should obey the masters without question, and this master was by nature an autocrat.

"It's enough that I say you have to do it," he cried angrily. "Do what I tell you at once."

Denis never moved an inch.

"I shall thrash you if you don't."

The boy neither spoke nor moved, while the other lads looked on in wonder. They could not understand anyone standing up to a master in this way. The master was uneasy, for he was not quite sure of his ground. Still, discipline was discipline, and must be maintained. He took a cane from the desk.

"I give you one more chance, Tregony," he said. "Do as I tell you."

"I don't think it's fair," replied Denis. "Prove to me that it is, and I'll do it."

The master came forward and gave the boy a severe caning, which he took without flinching.

"Now, will you do it?"

"Not until you prove to me that——"

Again the cane fell sharply upon the boy's tender flesh, and again the master commanded obedience. Still Denis remained obstinate.

The master hesitated what to do.

"All the other boys go," he said at length. "I'll deal with Tregony alone."

Denis rubbed various parts of his anatomy very gingerly. It seemed to him that he was well-nigh flayed, and he had difficulty to keep from crying. Nothing but his pride kept him. In a way, he could not understand; he felt he was standing out for a principle, and that he must not yield an inch.

"You'll not do as I tell you?"

"Not until you've proved to me that——"

The master did not wait until he had finished the sentence, but went away to consult the head master. He had never met a boy before who had acted in quite the same way.

Denis came near to being expelled from the school, and would have been but for certain considerations. For one thing, the head master, when he was consulted, and had inquired into the details of the case, was not quite sure that the form master was justified in the course he had taken. Even if he were within his rights, he had not acted judiciously. Added to this, he was not a very successful teacher, and the head master had more than once considered the advisability of asking him to secure another situation. But this was not all. Denis had now been six years at the school, and his conduct had been uniformly good. He was a high-spirited lad, and had been rather more prone to fighting than he should have been; but he had always been amenable to reason, and was a great favourite with both masters and boys. His expulsion, therefore, would have caused a great scandal, and undoubtedly have done harm to the school, which, just then, was not on the crest of the wave as far as popularity was concerned.

In spite of all these things, however, the head master might, for the sake of discipline, have been obliged to take this extreme step, especially as Denis proved as stubborn to him as to the form master, but for other things which he could not afford to ignore.

The truth was, Denis was a distinguished boy, and Dr. Graystone was very proud of him. He had been more than once publicly singled out as a lad of exceptional ability, of whom great things were expected. Moreover, a county scholarship had been offered, open to every Grammar School in Cornwall, and the winner of it would not only bring lustre to himself, but reflect a great deal of it on the school where he was educated ; and Dr. Graystone had great hopes that Denis would win it. Indeed, no other boy in his school stood the slightest chance.

The old Doctor urged this upon Denis when he discussed with him the seriousness of his misbehaviour.

" You know that your career may be ruined if you are expelled ? " he said.

" Yes, sir ; but I should never respect myself again—indeed, I should feel myself to be a mean cad if I did an unfair thing just for the sake of keeping a good name."

" Then you won't obey Mr. Johnson ? "

" If he'll prove that the thing he told me to do is right and fair. Why, sir, you don't think it is fair yourself, do you ? "

But the Doctor did not answer him. He saw that the lad was too keen-sighted not to see through ordinary sophistry.

There were other things also that weighed with the Doctor. His school had been pre-eminent among other Grammar Schools for cricket, largely because of Denis. In fact, he was captain of the school team, and had a big batting average, by far the best in the school ; and it would be a calamity to lose him during the coming season.

" Think of the grief the expulsion would cause your parents," urged the Doctor.

" They might be grieved," said the boy ; " but I'm sure they'll stand by me when I tell them everything."

The question to be considered, therefore, was, Who should leave the school—Mr. Johnson or Denis Tregony ? and the Doctor, as well as certain members of the committee, concluded that the pupil was of more importance than the master, and, as a consequence, the master went.

The matter was therefore hushed up, and Denis remained. But this must be said to his credit—he never boasted of his victory, and never again was he guilty of insubordina-

tion. Perhaps this was largely owing to the fact that no master insisted upon an order which he could not back up by the rules of the school, and, what was of far more importance to Denis, which he could not show to be reasonable and just.

One thing troubled Denis greatly through his boyhood. He thought of Mr. and Mrs. Tregony as his father and mother, and yet he never felt towards them as he thought he ought to feel. He also had vague memories of a home other than that of the farmer and his wife, and had dim visions of a lady whom he had a long time ago called mother, and that this lady had accompanied him on a great ship over a stormy sea. He thought the lady was very beautiful ; and by-and-by, when the vessel reached land, she had given him into the care of John Tregony, and had told him to call him father. It was all very dim and far away, but the boy remembered this as he might remember a dream. At first he had lived in the north of the county, but a year or two later they had all removed to Trewint Farm, where both John Tregony and his wife were unknown.

Probus Grammar School was one of the best schools in Cornwall, and the sons of many of the best families in the county were educated there. At first, John Tregony being only a tenant farmer, there was a tendency to treat Denis with scant courtesy ; but when the lad proved to be not only a scholar of more than ordinary ability, but also exceptionally good at games, he became quite a favourite and also a prominent figure in the school.

He was a good-looking lad too ; and, although too tall for his years and very thin, was physically strong and carried himself well.

"Have I always lived with you, father ?" asked Denis of John Tregony one day.

"Oh, you came down here when you was a very little boy," replied John. "You lived on another farm up Altarnun way before that."

"Yes, I know," replied Denis ; "but before that?"

"Why, before that," replied the farmer, "you was too young to mind anything."

"But I do remember things," replied the boy. "I can remember a very beautiful lady who used to kiss me, and

I can also remember a big ship and a very stormy sea ; it all comes to me like a picture. But neither you nor mother were in the picture."

" You must ha' dreamed," replied the farmer.

" No, I'm sure I didn't dream it," replied the boy.

" Well, you did go away with your aunt on a visit once when you was a very little chap."

" Over sea ? "

" It might a-been by sea," replied the farmer evasively. " I believe my sister did take you out in a boat once."

" A big boat ? " queried the boy eagerly.

" It might a-been a big boat," replied the farmer.

" And your sister—that's my aunt ? " queried Denis.

" Yes, that's your aunt."

" Was she very beautiful ? "

" Yes, Keziah was very well to look at."

" But where is she now ? "

" She's married, and lives in Devonshire. Her man have got a good farm—a very good one."

" I should like to go and see her," said Denis.

" Well, p'r'aps you may some day ; but North Petherwick is a long way from here."

And this was all the satisfaction Denis could get, although he could not identify the farmer's sister with the lovely woman he remembered. Still, as he told himself, he might only have been dreaming, and therefore all his fond fancies might have no foundation in fact.

When he was seventeen, and his time at Probus School was drawing to a close, he began to wonder what his future was to be. He was already far better educated than farmers' sons usually are, but he heard nothing about undertaking duties on the farm. Indeed, John Tregony rarely asked him to do any farm work except at harvest time, when everyone was commandeered. Denis did not care much for farming, although he saw nothing for him but the life of a farmer.

" Am I to be a farmer, father ? " he asked John Tregony one day.

" Farmer ? No," replied the farmer quickly.

" What am I to be then ? "

" Dunnaw, I'm sure."

" But surely you must know," replied Denis.

"Well, you see," said John Tregony, after some hesitation, "I ain't a-made up my mind. There's a lot ov things to consider, esn't there."

"What things?" asked Denis.

"Do 'ee like farmin'?" asked the farmer, evading the boy's question.

"Not very much," replied Denis; "but I see nothing else for me. There seems to be nothing in Cornwall except farming and mining, and I know nothing about mining."

"No, you doan't know anything about mining; but ther's no tellin'. Something may turn up."

About this time a stranger came to Trewint Farm and had a long talk with the farmer. He was an elderly gentleman, with a clean-shaven face, and spoke very quietly. He seemed to be greatly interested in the boy, and asked to see all his school reports. These he studied with great care.

"He seems to do better in literary subjects than in scientific," remarked the gentleman.

The farmer shook his head. He did not seem to understand the remark.

"Doctor Graystone says he's the cleverest boy in the school," he remarked presently.

"He's done very well, there's no doubt about that," was the reply. "The worst of it is that the standard of these county Grammar Schools is often very low. Very likely if he were at one of the big schools he might be nowhere."

Again the farmer was silent. He was not sure what he ought to say.

After this, Mr. Russell—for that was the stranger's name—spoke long and seriously with the farmer; and Denis, who was much interested in his visit, wandered around the farmyard, wondering why he was there. Indeed, he made the lad uncomfortable. He had heard the farmer speak about bad years and the difficulty he had in making the farm pay, and he was afraid lest Mr. Russell should be some creditor of his father, and was dunning him for money.

After he had left, therefore, he asked the farmer several keen, searching questions, which, as he thought, were not answered quite satisfactorily.

"Is Probus School expensive?" he asked.

"It's reckoned so," said the farmer.

"And you've had two or three bad years?"

"Ter'ble bad 'ears."

"Then why do you keep me at school?"

John Trewint hesitated a few seconds, then he said:

"Denis, my boy, I've suffered all my life through not being educated well. That being so, I made up my mind that you should have good schoolin'."

"But can you afford it, father?"

"Oh, I can manage somehow."

"Then I'm not going to leave school?"

"Well, you must. You see, they waan't take 'ee on much further. You're in what they call the sixth form, and that's high up."

"Oh, I see. And then I shall come home and learn farming, I suppose?"

"No, I don't think you'll learn farming."

"What shall I do then?"

"Oh, I shall be able to manage something, I daresay. I shall have a good year this year," and then, as though he liked the sound of the words he had just uttered, he repeated, "Yes, I shall have a good year this year."

Denis left Probus School with flying colours. He was the head boy, and had won all sorts of prizes. Dr. Graystone said many complimentary things about him, and referred to him as one who had done credit to the school.

"I hope," he said, "that it will be possible for him to continue his studies, for it would be a pity for a boy who has the makings of a scholar to follow anything else but a scholar's career. If he does, I am sure he will not forget his old school, and that he will be thankful for the grounding we have given him in the classics during the years he has been with us."

"Well," said Denis, as he left the school after his last "breaking-up" there, "father will have to tell me to-night what he thinks of doing with me. If he doesn't, I shall ask him point-blank. I wonder now—I wonder—" And then he began to recall all sorts of memories, and to dream all sorts of impossible dreams.

"Denis, my dear," said his mother to him that night,

"how should 'ee like to go to North Petherwick and see your Aunt Keziah?"

"I should like it above all things," said Denis, who associated his Aunt Keziah with the beautiful lady of his childhood's dreams.

"Then you may as well start soon."

"But father will be busy with the harvest soon, and he'll need me."

"Oh, father can do very well without you; besides, your 'ands be fine and soft, and 'arvestin' allays makes 'em sore."

"But I must begin some time."

"Oh, there's time enough. You do like chicken pie, doan't ee'? I'll be ready in a few minutes."

"But, mother——"

"There, now, caan't 'ee see I'm busy? You go into the best kitchen, and you'll find the pie."

Denis was too good a trencherman to resist the temptation which the chicken pie offered; indeed, he felt so hungry that, in his desire to enjoy his favourite dish, he quite forgot the questions he had made up his mind to ask; and as Dick Retallick, the son of the St. Lerrick rector, called immediately after, he did not find an opportunity for again broaching the subject that night.

The following morning John Tregony said to him:

"Denis, my boy, as you be goin' to see yer Aunt Keziah, you may as well go to Truro to-day and order some new clothes. Coon es the best tailor, so go to him. You may as well order three suits when you be about et."

"Is mother going with me?"

"No. You d' know what you like. You boys be allays up to all the new cuts. You'd better git all the collars, and neckties, and all that sort of thing that you do want to. As mother said to me last night, we doan't want you to go shabby to yer Aunt Keziah's. You'd better saddle the pony, and start right away."

"How much must I spend, father?" replied Denis, who was much surprised at these remarks.

"Oh, I don't know. Get good things, and tell 'em to send the bill to me."

"But, father, I should like to know. You know you told me you'd had some bad years."

"You do as you be told. Didn't I say the other day that I should have a good year this year?"

And Denis, pleased at being able to buy his own clothes, was too eager to saddle his pony and ride to Truro to ask any more questions.

"Denis," shouted his mother just before he left, "go to Lanyon's and get your likeness taken."

"My likeness, mother!"

"Yes; you ain't a'-ad it took for nearly two years. Have a dozen—cabinet size."

When Denis had ordered his clothes and had visited the photographer, he wandered away towards Malpas, which the country folk pronounced "Mopus." Here he saw a pleasure steamboat, which was just starting for Falmouth, and almost without a thought he jumped on board.

"I needn't go all the way to Falmouth," he reflected. "I can alight at King Harry's Ferry, and then catch another boat back here."

Perhaps there are no fairer sights to be seen in all England than are to be seen on the River Fal between Malpas and Falmouth. Here nature is prodigal of her beauty. The river during the summer time is as clear as crystal, and luxuriant foliage grows close to the water's edge. The countryside is lovely beyond words, almost tropical plants abound, and the rise and fall of hill and dale entrances all lovers of beauty. It may be that I who write this am prejudiced in favour of the county I love so much; but I would appeal to any who have sailed during the month of July on the broad bosom of the Fal between Malpas and Falmouth as to whether I am not right in my judgment.

Denis meant to have landed at King Harry's Ferry, but he did not. The reason for this can be quickly told. Scarcely had he boarded the *Queen of the Fal* when he forgot where he was. Sitting on the deck of the boat, and drinking in the beauty of the scene, he saw a young girl. She did not appear to be more than fourteen, and to anyone else she might only seem to be a rather pretty girl; but to Denis she was fairer than an angel. He sat near her, and watched her every movement like one entranced. In a way he could not understand, she fulfilled all the dreams that had ever floated through his brain. She was the

personation of all his life's desires. Poetry was enshrined in her eyes, her features. Beauty found expression in her smile. More than once she laughed as she spoke to the lady who sat by her side, and to him her voice was not musical—it was music. To the romantic boy, she scarcely belonged to this earthly sphere. She was just a visitor from some land of song and loveliness and light, who had come to this mundane world to tell the inhabitants of sweetness and beauty.

Presently the boat entered Falmouth Harbour, one of the finest and most picturesque in the world; and then a tall and somewhat severe-looking man came to the girl's side and sat by her.

"Enjoying it, Lenore?" she asked.

"Oh, it's just heavenly!" cried the child. "All the same, I think—" and the shriek of the whistle drowned the end of her sentence.

Denis watched the two disembark, and then, still almost unconscious of what he was doing, followed them.

A few seconds later he felt strangely lonely. The child, with the man and woman, whom he took to be her parents, entered a carriage and drove swiftly away.

"I wonder, I wonder—" he said, and then he felt as though he had been awakened from a beautiful dream.

## CHAPTER II

### THE VISIT TO DEVONSHIRE

DENIS woke early the following morning. The birds were singing gaily among the trees that grew near his bedroom, while poultry were cackling in the farmyard and the cattle were lowing in the meadows. At first, his mind seemed dazed, and he was unable to think one clear thought ; then suddenly his experience of yesterday came before him like a flash. Again he saw the beautiful child, whose face was as plain to him as when she sat on the boat listening to the waters that lapped its keel. Even yet he never thought of asking any questions about her. She seemed too ethereal, too far removed from him. In a way he could not understand she represented some ideal that lay in the background of his mind's vision. He became conscious of the fact that he had during the whole of his life dreamed of someone who should satisfy every longing of his life, and that now she had appeared to him in tangible reality. He did not expect ever to see her again or know anything about her ; nevertheless, she represented some ideal in his life, she stood for something that made everything wonderful.

During the day he wandered among the fields, thinking and dreaming. He had no desire to ask his father to give him work to do, neither did he interest himself in the horses which he had always loved. Somehow life seemed different. He did not know why, neither did he care to ask himself. The day following, however, he was filled with an intense longing to go to Falmouth. He might see her again. Of course he did not expect to speak to her—indeed, such a thought never entered his mind—but he felt hungry to feast his eyes on her. So he saddled his pony again and rode to Truro, and stabled his horse

at the Red Lion stables. After this he walked to Malpas, and boarded the *Queen of the Fal*. But he took no notice of the scenery : he was too busy watching the passengers. Perhaps she would again be there. She was not, however ; and when at length the boat reached Falmouth, he traversed the town in the hope that she might be somewhere visible. But she was not. Hour after hour he wandered among the streets of the quaint old seaport ; he went to Pendennis Castle ; he made his way to the new part of the town, where large hotels were built, but nowhere did he catch sight of her.

When night came, he again found himself back at his home, strangely sad at heart, yet strangely happy, but he never told either his father or his mother of his thoughts or his experiences. It seemed to him that she was not one to be discussed ; she was too ethereal, too sacred, too far removed from mundane things.

The next time he visited his tailor at Truro he again found his way to Falmouth, but he was still unsuccessful. Once he thought he saw her, and his heart leapt so that it pained him, but it was not she ; and when he knelt by his bedside that night he found himself sobbing. Why, he did not know, but the fact remained.

While he was waiting for his clothes to be delivered, in order that he might pay his visit to his Aunt Keziah, Mr. Retallick, the rector of St. Lerrick, came to see him.

"Well, Denis, my boy," said the rector, "I'm glad I'm to have you."

"Have me !" said Denis. "I don't understand."

"Not understand ! Why, surely your father has told you ?"

"He has told me nothing, except that I am going to see my Aunt Keziah," replied the boy.

"Oh, of course, we shall not begin till September," replied the rector ; "but surely he has told you that you are coming to the rectory to study with Dick and prepare for Oxford ?"

"I never heard of it !" gasped Denis.

The rector looked thoughtful.

"Perhaps I ought not to have mentioned it," he said ; "but I felt sure he would have told you. Anyhow, Dick is going on to Oxford as soon as he's ready for the entrance

examination, and your father wants you to work with him. I never had any idea that your father would be able—that is, that he intended you to go to Oxford. Don't you like the idea?"

"Of course, it's—just glorious!" gasped Denis. "Just glorious! And I'm to come over to the rectory and study with Dick?"

"That's the arrangement. As far as I can judge from the school examinations, you are further on than Dick," but I shall be able to tell when I get you together. Ah, there is your father; I must have a talk with him," and the rector rushed away, leaving Denis bewildered.

That night he began to examine his school prizes. Hitherto he had paid very little attention to them, but now he became much enamoured with one of the books he had received. It was a volume of poems by Edgar Allan Poe. He had never heard of this wild young genius, nor of his tragic career. He had read "The Raven," and wondered at the weird power of the poem, whose hopelessness had seemed to him like a funeral dirge. But he had never troubled about its authorship. It was not quite the kind of poem that appeals to the taste of a healthy boy. When he opened the volume, however, he saw the poem, and for the first time learnt its authorship. One verse especially appealed to him :

"' Prophet,' said, I, 'thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!  
By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both  
adore—  
Tell this soul, with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aiden,  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom the angels name Lenore!—  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels name Lenore?'  
Quoth the Raven, 'Never more.'"

"Lenore! Lenore!" he repeated; "it was what that proud-looking man called her;" and although the meaning of the poem was still unknown to him, his heart became strangely heavy.

He turned over the leaves of the volume, while the spell of the poet became stronger and stronger. It was all very unreal, all very sad, but he read like one fascinated. Vague fancies filled his brain, strange longings filled his soul. When he went to bed he found himself repeating the strange, haunting lines which Poe wrote about the

wife he had loved and lost. He knew not why he should do this, but he seemed to have no power over his thoughts.

"I was a child, and *she* was a child,  
In this kingdom by the sea ;  
But we loved with a love, that was more than love,  
I and my Annabel Lee ;  
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of heaven  
Coveted her and me."

It was very beautiful, very sad, very hopeless. The thought of the winds coming out of the clouds by night, chilling and killing the beautiful Annabel Lee, struck terror into his heart and made him look around the room, as if in fear of some unearthly visitant. Still, there were gleams of light in the darkness :

" But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
Of those who were older than we—  
Of many far wiser than we ;  
And neither the angels in heaven above,  
Nor the demons down under the sea,  
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee ;  
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee."

He did not know why, but he associated the words with the fair-haired child he had seen on the boat. He had seen her only that once, and he never expected to see her again ; but to him she was the fixed star of his life, the embodiment of all that was lovely and pure. She became a kind of inspiration too. He must never do anything wrong or unworthy, and he was to be brave, and pure, and loyal, or she would be disappointed. Of course he had no reason for believing that she ever thought of him, but reason did not count. He called to mind the one second in which their eyes had met. It was only for a second, for he had looked in another direction the moment in which she had noticed that he was watching her ; but that one glance had seemed to bring a new element into his life. He felt every nerve in his body tingle, and he felt sure that the sun would grow cold before the memory of that one look would die away.

Throughout the night he dreamt of her. Strange dreams they were, influenced doubtless by the imaginings of the mad genius whose words had so enthralled him. The Lenore he had seen appeared to him again ; she was always a long way from him, and always unreal. But he had followed her through shady woods and lonely dells until, by-and-by, as the night came on, he found himself in the region of the sea. He heard the lonely monotone of the waves, and he saw her clamber down the precipitous rocks, such as he had seen on the Cornish coast, until she came to a cavern that led far, far down under the cold waves. Of course he followed her, recking nothing of the region where she led him, and calling her by her name, Lenore. But, in spite of all his endeavours, he never came close to her, never touched the hand that she held towards him. Before he could come close to her side she had pointed upward, and then disappeared. This dream came to him many times that night, and it had always ended in the same way. The beckoning hand had always been lifted upwards, as if to point to the stars.

Three days later Denis started for North Petherwick, a Devonshire village, near which his Aunt Keziah's farm was situated. Both his father and his mother looked at him very proudly as they saw him off at Truro station. He wore some of the new clothes he had ordered at Truro, and they could not help thinking how well they fitted him and what a distinguished-looking boy he was. He was still very slim and very tall, but there was nothing awkward about him. He had a light, springy step, and was as straight as a rule.

"Not all Cornwall can show a finer boy, mother," remarked John Tregony.

"He d' look every inch a gentleman, too," remarked Mrs. Tregony proudly.

"Well, why shudna ?" retorted the farmer.

The worthy couple were not far wrong in their estimate of Denis's appearance. There was something lovable about the lad too. His large grey eyes were not only thoughtful, they told the observer that their owner was a lover of fun and frolic, while the well-shaped features and square, determined chin spoke of a character that was strong and vigorous.

"Well, you'll be back in two or three weeks, Denis," said John Tregony, as he shook hands with him for the fourth time. "I hope you'll have a good time with your Aunt Keziah."

"I mean to," said Denis.

"And you'll be sure to write twice a week," urged Mrs. Tregony, whose eyes were dim and her voice husky. Denis had never left home for such a long time before.

"I'll be sure, mother."

"Kiss me again, my deear."

Denis kissed his mother, careless of onlookers, and I am glad he did. It will be a sad day for England when our boys are ashamed for other boys to see them kiss their mothers.

Denis asked himself many times as the train swept northward why he was leaving home in order to see his Aunt Keziah. He had little or no remembrance of her, and there seemed no reason why he should leave his home, and yet he was eager to go. Why was it? Yes, he could not deny that the reason for his eagerness was that he wanted to ask her questions about his boyhood.

Denis bought a book at Truro which he fully intended to read, but he never once opened it. The truth was, it was the first time that he could remember going far from home, excepting on that one occasion, which, in spite of all his questionings, he was unable to understand. The sight of places other than those long familiar to him had a strong attraction for him, and he watched eagerly as the train swept through one of the fairest counties in England. Added to this, he was constantly wondering whether he might not catch another glimpse of the face which had haunted not only his night dreams, but his day dreams, since that day of all days on the river between Malpas and Falmouth.

But in this he was disappointed; he saw no suggestion of her anywhere, and he sighed as he thought of the madness of his own hopes.

When his train reached Plymouth, he alighted and went up to Plymouth Hoe. It was associated with some of the most glorious scenes in history, and history was one of his favourite subjects. He found that he had two hours to spare before the train for North Petherwick would start,

and so he had time to visit one of the places whose romantic interest had for years appealed to him.

At first, he was led to believe that this was the harbour at which the vessel of his early dreams landed. but he quickly gave up the idea. Plymouth Harbour was close to a great town, while there was no town of importance near the place where he had last seen the beautiful lady. All the same, the scene enchanted him—the broad sweep of the bay, the distant lighthouse, the beetling cliffs, the beautiful Edgcumbe lands. It was here that the heroes of the Elizabethan days were playing bowls while the Spanish Armada, “like a great half-moon,” swept up the Channel. His heart thrilled as he thought of it. Life was great then. Men dared to fight impossible battles and to attempt impossible things. No wonder that poet and playwright dwelt proudly on a period that created a new era in the life of the nation. His favourite story was “Westward Ho!” He had read it more than once, and revelled in the deeds of the doughty heroes whose story the author told. To him the book was more than a story—it was a song of liberty. When great Amyas Leigh sharpened his sword on the deck of the vessel and waited for the coming of the Spaniard, he was a warrior of freedom, preparing to fight for more than life. It was not simply revenge that Amyas had at heart. It was not merely a personal wrong that he wanted to right. He hated oppression. He hated a system that meant chains, and cruelty, and injustice, and slavery.

As his eyes swept over the shining sea he saw, as in a vision, the great Armada coming up the Channel. He realised what it meant too. That Armada represented tyranny and darkness; its mission was to rob the new-born nation of its liberty. Had it succeeded, all history would have been changed. England would have been little more than a name on a map. Its voice would never have been heard amongst the councils of the nations. But Spain found England ready; the life-blood of truth ran in the veins of Hawkins and Drake and Raleigh and the rest of them. Amyas Leigh was a symbol of England’s youth, and thus would be for ever dear to the heart of the British boy. Charles Kingsley little knew when he wrote “Westward Ho!” of the influence he would have

on the youth of the nation ; little realised of the fires he would kindle in the hearts of untold multitudes of lads like Denis Tregony. As the boy stood there on that summer day and remembered the scenes for which Plymouth Hoe was famous, he thought but little of theological problems, or of that great upheaval called the Reformation, which had given new life and strength to the land. But the story had done its work in him nevertheless. Down deep in his heart was the white passion for liberty which the book had fed. He unconsciously hated all forms of oppression and superstitious tyranny, and, when the time came, he would be ready to fight and die for every form of freedom which is man's inalienable birthright.

Up to now, however, he had never seen the statue erected to the memory of Drake, the great naval hero, but presently it caught his attention. Yes, he was the beau-ideal of the British sailor—sturdy, strong, resolute, fearless, faithful. Not all the Spaniards that ever lived, not all the curses that ever the priests had invented, could frighten him. The boy's heart thrilled as he saw him, and a shiver passed through him as he read the words at the base of the monument erected in memory of the destruction of the Armada :

“ GOD BLEW WITH HIS WINDS, AND THEY WERE  
SCATTERED ! ”

Denis Tregony realised the poetry of the words. They stirred his soul and caused all sorts of unutterable longings to come into his heart. Yes, he, too, would fight for liberty, for truth ; he would be the eternal enemy to tyranny and oppression.

A little later he was on his way to North Petherwick. When, late in the afternoon, he drew near his aunt's farm, his heart beat high with hope. He felt as if something was going to be explained. The dreams of his childhood would have meaning. As the trap drew up to the doorway of the house, he saw in his mind's eye the face of the beautiful lady of his childhood, and, with fast-beating heart, he rushed to the door.

A kind, motherly-looking woman met him and held out her arms.

“ Denis, my dear,” she said, “ I am glad to see you.”

“ Are you my Aunt Keziah ? ” he asked.

"To be sure, I am, my dear. Who should I be else ? There, now, you must be hungry. Come in and have some tea right away. Never mind yer bag ; Zacky Martin will see to that. Aw, my deear, I shouldn't 'ave knowed 'ee. You be growed out of all thought. Why, you be 'most a young man."

"And where is Uncle Ephraim ?"

"He's gone to market, my dear ; he'll be back in a few minutes. Well, I am glad to see you. Do tell me how your mother and father be. Ther', now, lev me give 'ee another kiss. I be glad to see 'ee, fer sure."

Denis looked at her curiously, and tried to trace some resemblance between this rosy-apple-cheeked woman and the beautiful lady of his early memories. But he could see none. Keziah Derry was just an orthodox Devonshire farmer's wife. Of her goodness and kindness of heart there could be no doubt ; moreover, she was almost handsome in her homely way, but the sight of her dispelled the dreams of years. The fact saddened his heart, but he determined not to show it to his aunt. It would be an ill return for her warm welcome to show any sense of disappointment. Besides, she might be able to tell him things concerning which his father was persistently silent.

"It is good of John to let you come, Denis, my dear," went on the good, motherly soul, as she bade him sit close to her at the table, which was simply laden with good things. "For years I've minded to go down to see you all, but I've never found the time. You see, every day have brought its work, so to speak, and Truro is a long way off. Besides, I was never one to gad about. But I be glad to see you, my dear—as glad as if someone had given me a hundred pound. Let me look at 'ee again. No, you bean't a bit like either your father or your mother."

"No ?"

"Not a bit, my dear. Why, you be a regular young gentleman !"

The boy looked pleased.

"Wha's your father goin' to do with 'ee ? Are 'ee goin' to be a farmer ?"

"I don't know ; he's never told me."

"And you've only just left school, I hear."

"About two weeks."

"Well, I never! But there, you be the only boy. Aw, my deear, I ain't a-got no children at all. It didn' please the Lord to give me any; but if I only had a boy like you, I should—"

"What, Aunt Keziah?"

"I don't know, my deear. There, give me another kiss, and let me give you some more ham. Why, ther's Ephraim. I thought he'd come back early. We've been talkin' for days 'bout 'ee. Ephraim! He's here!"

A tall, bronzed man of about fifty entered the room, and shook Denis's hand heartily.

"Us be glad to see you, fer sure," he cried. "Yer Aunt Keziah be Cornish, like you be; but you'll see that the Devonshire people be just as hearty. There, now, have some more tea."

"I really couldn't, uncle. Aunt Keziah has been trying to make me a gourmand ever since I've been here, and I really can't take anything more."

"All nonsense! Why, you must! I can't set down and ait while you watch me. There now, fall to, fall to," and Ephraim Derry helped him to a plateful of chicken pie. "You must excuse me for makin' so free," he went on; "but although you do luk so much like Squire Northdown's son, you be my own flesh and blood—or your aunt's flesh and blood, which is just the same thing. Are you fond of ridin', Denis?"

"Very," replied the boy. "I broke in the pony I ride at home."

"That's yer soarts. We shan't 'ave 'arvest for a couple of weeks yet, so I sh'll be able to go around with 'ee a bit."

For the next three days Denis was so full of the delights of the new farm that he almost forgot his purpose in coming to North Petherwick, and, if the truth must be told, thought very much less of Lenore. She was constantly in the background of his mind, and she still appeared to him as a vision of beauty and purity, but the vision was not so vivid. Perhaps this was partly because he fell in love with a beautiful young horse which his uncle had allotted to him during his stay, for at seventeen few things are dearer to a boy than to feel a horse's shoulders between his knees. The farm, moreover, was large, and the countryside very beautiful.

When he had been there three days, however, the longing to hear what his Aunt Keziah had to say concerning his early childhood came back with renewed force.

"Aunt," he said, as he sat with the farmer and his wife one evening, "will you tell me something?"

"Anything I can, Denis, my dear," said the kindly woman, who was learning to love the boy more each day.

"Will you tell me what you know about my early childhood?"

"What do you mean, my dear?"

"I have memories about my childhood which I can't explain. I have asked my father and mother about them, but they will tell me nothing."

"You must a-bin dreamin', Denis, my dear."

"That's what they say, but it's not been all dreams. I can remember the time when I saw my father for the first time—when he was a stranger to me; and I knew my father before I knew my mother. Why is it?"

The woman changed colour, and shifted uneasily in her chair.

"What should I know, my dear?"

"I have a distant memory of a beautiful lady whom I called mother; and I am sure that she took me a voyage on a great ship on a stormy sea. It all seems a very long way off, but it's real all the same. I remember that when the ship came to land I saw my father for the first time, but I never saw the beautiful lady again. When I asked my father to tell me about her, he said it was you."

"Me? Lord bless the boy!"

"But he did. Will you tell me all about it, Aunt Keziah?"

"I've nothing to tell 'ee, my dear."

"Sure?"

"Of course I'm sure."

Denis sighed with disappointment. All the same, he felt sure that his aunt was purposely seeking to keep something from him. After he had gone to bed that night he could not sleep, and he heard his uncle and aunt discussing something with great seriousness. The partition between his room and his aunt's was thin, and he heard certain words they said in spite of himself.

"I tell yu, Keziah," he heard Ephraim Derry say, "if yu du knew anything, you ought to tell him."

"But I doan't knew nothin' fer certain. John was always very close."

"But 'e'll sune be a young man. Yu ought to tell him what you knew."

"Hush!" said the woman; "don't speak so loud," and after that she spoke more quietly.

The next night Ephraim Derry had business with a neighbouring farmer, and when they were alone together his Aunt Keziah said to him:

"Denis, my dear, I don't knew nothin' for certain, but I've been thinkin' about what you said last night, and I'll tell you everything I can remember."

## CHAPTER III

### DENIS GOES TO OXFORD

THEY were sitting together beneath the best kitchen window of North Petherwick farmhouse. At their feet was a small grass plot, bordered by flowers. In the near distance tall elm trees grew, through which they could see the distant cornfields, which were fast ripening. The air was very warm and still, and, while it was far from dark, daylight had gone.

"I didn't mean to tell you," said the farmer's wife, "seeing as how I know nothing for certain, but somehow I feel as though I must. I think it must be something in the night."

She almost shivered as she spoke, warm as the evening was.

"The cawin' of the young rooks do always make me feel as though life is full of secrets," she went on. "I thought I'd grown out of my foolish ways of thinking, but it seems as though I 'avn't. You see, I was brought up in Cornwall, as you've been, and in my day we was made to believe in all sorts of curious traade."

"Yes, yes," cried Denis eagerly; "but——"

"Yes, I know, my deear boy, what you be thinking. All through the day I said I wouldn't upset your mind by what may be onnly silly fancy, but now, in the quietness of the evening, I feel as though I must speak. 'Twas always the same with me. I was always afraid of ghosts at night-time. But tell me, my deear, you 'avn't got no—no sort of notion, 'ave 'ee, that—that—that there is anything strange about yourself?"

"No," said the boy. "Sometimes for months I never think about it, and then suddenly all sorts of curious feelings and longings come over me. It is then that—that I feel

different from what other boys have told me that they feel about their fathers and mothers. But it isn't that that I think of so much. I am always haunted by the thought that I called someone else mother before I knew—that is—my mother. Besides, never once have either of them spoken to me about the time when I was a baby."

"Never once?"

"No, never once. I say, Aunt Keziah, you know something. Tell me, will you?"

But the woman was silent. She no longer seemed the prosperous, happy farmer's wife, but a woman who carried a secret in her heart.

"I've thought about it in this way," went on Denis. "Father lived in Altarnum parish before he removed to Trewint, didn't he?"

"Yes, at a farm called Crow Hill."

"How long did he live there?" asked the boy.

"How long? It must a-been two or three years."

"And you lived there with them?"

"Not to say lived, exactly," said the woman. "I stayed with them for a time. You—you were a little boy of about two or three, I should think. You see—" Again the woman shivered as if she were afraid.

"Tell me, Aunt Keziah," urged the boy. "You said you would."

"I—I daren't; I'm afraid," she said.

"Of what?"

"I don't know. I never promised anything, only, you see—"

"Tell me."

"I'm afraid I oughtn't. It may be nothing. Drive it out of your mind, my dear. Come into the house; it's getting cold."

"No, it's not cold at all, aunt. Besides, it's ever so much nicer out here. I know what I can do."

"What can you do?" asked the woman eagerly.

"You say my father and mother lived at Crow Hill Farm for some years. If I am—that is, if I was born there, the date of my birth and christening, and all that sort of thing, will be in the parish registers. I can go there and find out."

"I wouldn't, my dear."

"Why?"

"Because—well—look here, promise me you'll not do that?"

"I feel I can't help myself, Aunt Keziah."

"You'll not tell your father or mother if I tell you what I know?"

"Not if you don't wish me."

"Then—look here, Denis, it may be all a pack of nonsense. You mightn't think it now to look at me, but as a girl I had all sorts of notions about things, and this may be all nonsense. Your father and I were brought up on a farm in the parish of Lewannick, which is adjoining Altarnum. It was a small farm, and father had hard work to make it pay, so John and I both determined to go away, and make our own way, so to speak. I was always clever with my fingers, and in time got to be a lady's maid up here in Devonshire. Of course it took me years to do it, but I did, and in that way got to know your uncle, Ephraim Derry. As for John, he was fortunate, too. He was able to render some service to a gentleman—I don't know what it was, for he was always very quiet about it. Anyhow, he was able to stock a small farm. He got married, too, to Mary Bennett, of Lewannick, and they went to live at Crow Hill, the farm he took.

"When Ephraim and I settled to get married, and he insisted on my leaving my place, I took it into my head to go and see John, and tell him what I had decided to do. I knew that he had got married three or four years before, but he was never one to write much; neither, for that matter, was I. Still, I had known Mary Bennett—that is, your mother—years before, and always liked her, although so many years had passed that I doubted if I should know her again. Well, to make a long story short, I made up my mind to give them a surprise, and go down without letting 'em know. So I took the train to Launceston, and then hired a trap to take me out to Altarnum, which is seven or eight miles away. When I got to Five Lanes and inquired where Crow Hill Farm was, I found out that it was a lonely place away out on the moors. I was told that no other house was near, and that John's nearest neighbour was about two miles away. However, I didn't mind. It was summer-time, and I had plenty of time to

get there before dark. You've never been Altarnum way, 'ave you, Denis, my deear? 'Tis the dreariest, loneliest region in all Cornwall. Summer-time as it was, I was nearly frightened before I got there. Crow Hill was a little farm not more than thirty or forty acres, just a little valley reclaimed from the moors, although the bit of ground was so good that he managed to make a living out of it.

"When I got there I gived 'em both a fright, but they soon got over that, and were very glad to see me, for, as I told you, John and I were very fond of each other as brother and sister, while I had liked Mary Bennett as a little maid; but hardly had I set down than in come you."

"In came I?" said Denis, with wide-open eyes.

"In came you, my dear. A lovely little boy you were, with long, yellow hair, and great longing-looking eyes."

"'Holloa! John,' I said, 'and who's this?'

"'Tis our little boy,' said both of them together.

"'Your little boy?' I said. 'Why, he must be three years old.'

"'That's just his age,' said Mary.

"'But you never told me,' I said, all dazed like.

"'Didn't we?' said John. 'No, I don't s'pose we ever did. But there you are.'

"'Well, I think 'tis ter'ble close of 'ee, John, not to tell your own sister, and we always such good friends, too,' I said, for I felt a bit slighted.

"'Oh, I be very bad at writing,' said John, 'and we didn't think you'd care.'

"Well, Denis, my dear, I may be wrong, or I may be right; but I couldn't help thinking as I looked at you that you weren't a bit like either of them. The hair of our family has always been as black as ink, while the same may be said of the Bennetts, while yours was then just golden, although it's got darker now. But, besides that, your face was different.

"'What do you call him then?' I said, after a bit.

"'Denis,' replied John.

"'Denis!' I said. 'Why, that's more like an Irish name than English. However did 'ee come to call him that?'

"'Oh, a very dear friend of mine was called Denis,' he replied, but he said it in such a funny way that I didn't ask any more questions.

"But you was a dear little thing, and you took to me at once. You got on my knee and kissed me as though I'd been your nurse. In fact, Mary seemed quite jealous at the way you cried when she wanted to put you to bed."

"And is that all?" asked Denis, who was deeply interested in her story.

"Well, it was all for that night, although I still thought it strange in my brother not telling me that they had had a little boy for three years."

"And afterwards?" asked Denis eagerly.

"How did you think there was anything afterwards?" asked the woman.

"I know there was," said the boy. "Tell me."

"Of course, what I'm going to tell you now may be nothing," said Aunt Keziah; "but, as I told you, my dear, I'd been a lady's maid, and had lived in a big house, so I knew the kind of clothes that the children of the gentry wore."

"And did I wear fine clothes?" asked the boy.

"No, you didn't; but I happened to open a drawer in my bedroom, and I saw some clothes such as—well, such as Mary couldn't make nor wouldn't think of buying."

"Why not?"

"Why, my dear, Mary was born and reared at Lewannick, and had never been further than Launceston in her life. And I know the only kind of children's clothes she'd been accustomed to see."

"But it proves nothing," said the boy, with a sigh.

"That's as you may think of it," replied Mrs. Derry. "All the same, added to the other things, it set me wondering again."

"But you said nothing to my father or mother?"

"No, I said nothing, not even when—" The woman paused, as if afraid to go on.

"When what? Tell me, Aunt Keziah."

"When I had been at Crow Hill Farm two or three days," went on the farmer's wife, "I took you out for a walk, and it came on to a heavy shower. I had no umbrella or wraps of any sort, and we were both drenched. When I got you home, I took off your wet things as fast as I could, and then I saw that you had a little gold chain and a locket round your neck."

"A gold chain and a locket!" repeated the boy.

"It may be that I did wrong," went on the dame, "but I opened the locket. I had just time to open it, and that was all, for I heard Mary coming into the room. I don't think she saw me, for I had it all covered up again before she came in; but she took you away from me in a hurry."

"But you opened the locket? You saw!" cried the boy. "What was it?"

"You told me just now that you had a sort of memory of a beautiful lady, who brought you across a stormy sea. What was she like?"

The lad looked away across the now moonlit fields, and tried to find words to express the thoughts which his aunt's question had called to life. But he could not. The picture in his mind's eye was too illusive, too shadowy.

"I can't remember it," he said presently. "It's something like the things one sees in dreams, aunt. In a way, I can see her as I saw her then, but I can't describe her. I always think of her as very beautiful and very sad, and then she fades away."

"I only just caught a glimpse of it," said the woman, "but I could see she was a beautiful maid. She had laughing, roguish eyes, and the kind of face that drive men out of their senses."

"You don't mean that it was bad, do you?"

"Oh, no, my dear—no, anything but that. Nobody could help loving her; but it was the face of a maid that loved teasing and mischief and that sort of thing. But this is the thing I can't understand. Denis, my dear—why should you be wearing it?"

"Ah!" cried the boy.

"The next day, and several times after, you and me went out together, but you never wore the locket again."

The boy sat silent for a long time.

"Is that all?" he asked at length.

"Why, in a sense it is, my dear, and yet it isn't. You see, I was curious. I never said a word to either Mary or John. Somehow I thought it better not to; but one day, when I was at the farm which I told you was nearly two miles away from Crow Hill, I, in a sort of roundabout way, asked some questions. Well, the woman there

couldn't mind when you was born at all. In fact, she didn't know there was a cheeld at Crow Hill."

"I see what you mean," said Denis, after another silence, and then the conversation ended, for Ephraim Derry came home and challenged the boy to a game of draughts.

The friendship of Denis and his aunt was established on a very firm foundation by the time he had to take his departure and return home. They had promised to write each other at stated times, and the boy was to visit her whenever he could. Why it was, Denis could not tell, but he felt that his aunt was dearer to him than his mother.

I am afraid I am spending rather a long time over Denis's boyhood ; but what I have written down seems to me to be necessary to a right understanding, not only of after events, but of certain actions which the reader may feel inclined to condemn.

When September came, he went to St. Lerrick Rectory every day to study with Dick Retallick. He was very glad to go, for, as I have said, he was not fond of farming, and had rather dreaded settling down to that kind of life.

He never said a word to either his father or his mother concerning what his Aunt Keziah had said to him, not because he did not regard it of importance, but because something seemed to forbid him. More than once he had determined to inquire further concerning the things which puzzled him ; but when he had endeavoured to approach his father he felt as though some weight were put upon his tongue. He tried to explain why it was, but could not ; nevertheless, the fact remained that an influence was at work which he could not resist.

And this leads me to another thing. From the time he left school he was constantly dreaming wild, incomprehensible dreams ; while at night-time, especially if he were walking alone in the dark, he felt that presences were near him which could not be seen by the natural eye, that voices were speaking to him in a language which he must some day learn. When he thought about these things, he told himself that the dreams could be dated from the time when he first began to read Edgar Allan Poe's poems, and he fancied that this strange genius had had a wonderful and weird influence on his brain. And yet a happier boy

did not exist. He still kept up his interest in games, and his services were constantly requisitioned by the old scholars of his school when an important match had to be played. He kept up his love for riding too. Not only did he ride over to St. Lerrick Rectory every day, but Dick Retallick and he had many a wild gallop together, and more than once they followed the hounds together.

At length the time came when the rector declared that both he and Dick were ready for the entrance examination which should admit them to Oxford University, and both passed it with ease.

"I hope," said Denis to his father, "that I shall be able to win some scholarship or other. I am afraid I am an awful burden to you."

"No, you bean't," said John Tregony, almost testily.

"But the cost of my tuition at Mr. Retallick's and my college fees must of necessity be very heavy," he urged.

"That's all right," replied the farmer. "I had a good year last year, and I shall have another one this."

And with this Denis had to be content, for much as he longed to know what caused his father to send him to Oxford, he could not bring himself to ask the questions that lay near his heart. When he learnt that it was settled for him to go to Balliol, he was more puzzled than ever. He had fully expected to go to one of the smaller and less important colleges, and it passed his comprehension to know why John Tregony should have decided upon one of the most expensive colleges in the University.

But no word of explanation was forthcoming ; and as Oxford soon cast its spell upon him, he forgot his wonder in the delights of his life there.

Denis did well at Oxford ; not so well as he might have done had he not been in such demand for sports, but still well. Indeed, more than one of the professors told him that, if he would only throw over sports altogether, he might have a brilliant University career. But this Denis would not do. He was passionately fond of cricket ; and when he found that he could hold his own as well in the University as in his old school, he yielded to its spell, and was soon one of the most popular men in the University team. When the cricket season was over he took up golf, and here, again, although he found the game dreadfully

tantalising at first, he found his handicap become less and less with great rapidity. Indeed, during the long vacation, after his second year at Oxford, he went over to the West Cornwall links and carried everything before him. The sporting nature of the course seemed to suit him perfectly, and when, with a handicap of three, he was able to get around the eighteen holes with a gross score of seventy, the members of the club told him that his handicap was a fraud, and that he ought to be plus three.

On his return for his third year, however, his game fell off fearfully. No one could tell why, but the fact remained. Denis knew why, however; and, although he spoke no word to anyone, it seemed to him that there was only one thing in the world to live for.

It happened in this way. He was now over twenty years old, and he was wondering what lay in store for him after the expiration of the year. There was no doubt, in spite of his love for sports, that he would take a good degree; but what he would do after that he had not the slightest idea. He was thinking of this as, one day in October, he was passing from the college grounds into the street. In so doing, he saw the old raven, loved at the time by nearly every student.

"It might be Edgar Allan Poe's bird come to life," he thought, with a smile, as the grim-looking creature hopped towards him. But no sad thoughts were in his mind. Although summer was over, the trees were still green and the sky was cloudless; indeed, it might have been June instead of October.

He went to a shop close by and bought some food for the bird, and came back to him.

"Come, hop on my wrist, old man," he said.

The bird straddled on his wrist and looked at him gravely.

"Now then, eat this."

The raven pecked at the parts of the food that pleased him, but cast aside the rest, as if in disdain.

"Do you understand what I am saying, Adam?"

The bird gravely turned his head on one side as if he understood.

Instantly Denis's mind turned to the question asked of the raven in Poe's poem, and then, as if by magic, he saw,

as if in a vision, the face of the child he had seen on the river steamer between Malpas and Falmouth.

"Shall I ever see her again, Adam?" he said, and again, as if the bird understood, he looked up and seemed to wink.

"Tell me, shall I?" he repeated, and in a way he could not understand he became very earnest. His heart leapt in his bosom, for the bird fluttered its wings and gave a caw.

Dropping the bird as though he were afraid of it, he left the college, and walked along the street towards the monument erected in memory of Ridley and Latimer. He stopped a moment to look at it, and then, hearing the sound of voices near by, he turned his head and looked.

Close by him was the young girl he had seen on the river in Cornwall years before, the Lenore of his dreams.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

IT seemed to Denis that she had altered but little during the three years which had flown since he had seen her last. He reckoned that she must now be about seventeen, but she appeared to him as still a child. Her hair still hung in shining tresses over her shoulders, and in her eyes was the same expression of wonder and delight at all she saw. He did not think of that at the time ; he was too overwhelmed at the thought that she stood in the same street and breathed the same air. But afterwards, when he had returned to his rooms, and sat dreaming of her, he reflected that she had scarcely altered at all.

"Lenore, come and read this."

Yes, he recognised the man, and, although there seemed but little resemblance between them, Denis felt sure he was Lenore's father.

He heard her voice, but could detect no words. Her face was turned from him. Then a lady who stood by said something to make the girl laugh, a laugh which seemed to the boy as sweet as the sound of silver bells on a frosty night.

"Yes," said the man, "we stand on classic ground—on holy ground. Those men died for a great truth ; they died for light, for freedom. Their death meant the birth of England to new life and power. It will be a sad day for us if we ever forget the truths for which they gave their lives."

It was evident the man was deeply in earnest. Denis had no doubt that he was a strong Protestant, but he paid him little heed. He was too intent upon watching the face of the girl, which was now turned towards him. For she, too, had caught the meaning of the monument which

had been erected in memory of the old-time heroes, and her imagination had caused her to see the event which perhaps did more to break the chains of tyranny than any other.

"I wonder," she said, "if we should be willing to die for the truth, as they did?"

"I doubt it," said the man. "We have forgotten the past, and we lack the conviction that made them great. Still, God helping me, I would rather die than—"

"Oh, don't!" cried one of the ladies of the party. "The weather is too warm for so much earnestness. And we mustn't stay any longer; if we do, we shall miss—"

Denis did not hear the end of the sentence, for the lady moved away as she spoke. A motor-car stood near, and Denis, not realising what he was doing, moved nearer to them as they entered the conveyance.

The chauffeur rushed to the front of the engine and began to turn the handle furiously, while the party ensconced themselves in the luxuriously appointed car. A few seconds later the chauffeur leapt to his seat and laid hold of the wheel. As for Denis, he stood on the base of the monument, looking at them with wide-open eyes. He wanted to speak to them, follow them; but he dared not. Even then he knew that he was acting very rudely by keeping near them in such a way.

As the wheels of the motor-car began to move the girl turned to have a last look on the monument, and for a second the eyes of the boy and girl met. He was not sure, but it seemed to him that he saw a look of recognition, while her colour heightened. A moment later the car sped down the street, and Denis, heedless of what he was doing, rushed after it. Even then he had a sort of feeling that he was doing a mad thing as, with his gown fluttering in the wind, he sped after the retreating party; but he ran on, realising with dismay that every second increased the distance between them.

There was a violent collision, and he came to a sudden stop.

"Hulloa! Tregony, where the Dickens are you going?"

"I—I—don't know." He spoke like one bewildered.

"I shouldn't think you did. Why, you've nearly knocked me into the middle of next week. Didn't you

see where you were going ? If I were a bobby I'd run you in. Why, you look like a madman. I believe you've broken my arm, too."

By this time Denis had recovered himself. In his eagerness to keep the car in sight he had collided with another student, and sent him staggering against a house.

"I'm awfully sorry, Symonds, old man. I—I didn't think what I was doing."

"But what were you up to ? "

"I—I was following some people."

"What people ? "

"I—I don't know. I wanted to speak to them."

"But don't you know who they were ? "

"No—yes, that is—— I say, I'm downright vexed with myself, Symonds. And—and—won't you come to my rooms ? "

"No, I can't. I promised to go with Golightly for a round of golf ; but I shan't be able to hit a ball," and Symonds rubbed his arm gingerly. "Shall I come round to-night and bring the doctor's bill ? "

"Do," cried Denis, with a laugh.

"Oh, yes, it's all very well for you to laugh, but you were very near causing a funeral. Still, I'll drop in to-night."

Denis returned to his rooms in a very subdued frame of mind. Why, he asked himself, should he be so moved at the sight of this unknown girl ? He remembered that after he first saw her on Truro river he haunted Falmouth in the hope of finding her, while now he had behaved like a madman in the streets of Oxford. He was thankful she had not seen him running after her, and he feared that she must think him very rude for staring at her so from the Martyrs' Memorial. Even then he must have cut a sorry figure, while if she had seen him afterwards——

He tried to work, but could not. Ever between his eyes and the book were the laughing, serious, mischievous, wondrous eyes of Lenore. He was thankful he knew her name. He had heard her addressed by it twice now, and he wondered who she was and where she came from. Should he ever see her again ? In all probability not. Evidently her father had motored to Oxford, and possibly she lived hundreds of miles away This thought made him

very sad. To live his life without ever—— But what a fool he was to trouble about an unknown child! For she was only a child, and, of course, she was oblivious to the fact of his existence.

No, he could not work; he would go out for a walk in the country. A five miles' tramp would do him good. He went out into the grounds and again saw the raven—the bird he had named Adam on account of his ancient appearance. The bird straddled up to him as before, and regarded him with a knowing look.

"Did you know she was there, Adam?" he asked.

The raven wagged his head solemnly.

"Shall I ever see her again, old man?"

But the bird, seeing he had no food for him, turned away.

"You ill-omened rascal!" laughed Denis, but his heart was heavy all the same. Why should he be so angry at the vagaries of the harmless old bird? He was not a weird creature like the thing which was born in Poe's mad brain.

He took a long walk in the country and then came back, his mind still full of his experiences earlier in the afternoon.

During the next week he spent all the time he was able in wandering around the streets of Oxford. He hoped, even although he had no ground for hoping, that he would see Lenore again; but he was disappointed. She did not cross the pathway of his life.

It was at this time that he was "off his game" at golf. When next he visited the links it seemed to him that all his old skill had departed. Men whom he had looked upon as utterly beneath him from the golfing standpoint were able to beat him easily, until, utterly disgusted with himself, he vowed that he would give up the game.

"Why should I be always thinking about her?" he asked himself again and again. "I don't know who she is or where she comes from. I don't suppose I shall ever see her again either. Besides, she is nothing to me."

Presently his old zeal for work came back to him, and, in a way he could not understand, it seemed to him that she helped him.

He had a kind of feeling that she would know whether were a success or a failure, and he dreaded the idea of

doing badly, if only for her sake. As a consequence, he worked harder during the third year than in either of the two years he had spent there, and as he was going in for Classical honours the professors who especially believed in him were delighted.

In other ways, too—ways that he could not understand—she had a marked influence over his life. One night during the following winter he was feeling wretched and unsettled. The sky of his life looked black, and nameless fears seemed to haunt him. The novelty of his Oxford life had gone long since, and long hours of study had somewhat unnerved him. It was one of the hours in a youth's life when he is most in need of a guiding principle and of sacred ideals.

Three fellows came into his rooms.

"Come, Tregony," cried one, "working again! Come, now, you virtuous rascal, come out for a spree."

"Spree?" cried Denis.

"Yes." And then one of them told him of their programme for the night. As I have said, Denis was in a restless, nervous condition. He longed for excitement, and the programme that had been sketched appeared full of fascination.

"Come, Tregony," cried the one who was evidently the leader of the party, "you are not going to be a curate, and you are not graduating for a saint. Besides, nobody will know. Don't coop yourself up here like a monk; come and make a night of it."

He said other things which I will not here set down, and to the lad, siren voices seemed to be calling.

"All right, I'll go," he said at length; "I'm sick of being cooped up here. Wait a minute while I change my clothes."

He left the room, his heart beating wildly, his blood on fire. Hot recklessness was upon him, the passion for unrestricted liberty was for the moment triumphant.

"What have I to do with conventional morality?" he said to himself. "Why can't I enjoy myself as other fellows do? I've been a milksop, a—a—"

He stood still, as though he heard voices calling him. Strange influences seemed to be around him. Then, as if by magic, a strange light shone in a dark corner of the room.

"What can it be?" he asked himself; and then, in some unaccountable way, the light appeared to take shape. At first it was indistinct and had no meaning for him, but presently a young girl's face was plainly outlined before him.

"Lenore! Lenore!" he cried; but whether it was only the cry of his heart or whether his lips articulated the name he could not tell.

Then he thought the eyes of the girl rested upon him, and they were as pure as a mountain dewdrop. To the young man they seemed to plead with him, to warn him. He could see a kind of horror in them, too, as though she knew what was in his heart.

Involuntarily a prayer rose from his heart, and he heard himself saying, "God help me! God help me!"

A few seconds later he went back to his companions. "I am not going," he said quietly.

"Not going! Why?"

He told them. "I should never cease being ashamed of myself if I did," he said. "I should feel that I had sold myself to the devil for a night's pleasure."

The leader of the party laughed. "We had better call you Saint Denis right away," he sneered.

Denis was silent.

"As though a fellow should be tied to his mother's apron-strings," went on the other.

"You wouldn't like your mother to see you in the place you propose to go to," cried Denis, "and you couldn't look straight in her eyes and tell her. Anyhow, I'm not going."

The leader still sneered; but the others were silent, and looked ashamed.

"Well, come on, you chaps," cried the tempter. "We will leave St. Denis to his prayers."

But the other two would not go. Somehow the atmosphere was changed, and the spell of evil was broken.

That night, when the others had gone back to their rooms and Denis was left alone, he pondered over what had taken place. It seemed to him as though he had been standing on the brink of a horrible pit, and that the child to whom he had never spoken, and had seen but twice, saved him from destruction.

Of course Denis became a member of the Oxford Union, but he did not speak at any of the debates. He was much interested in the subjects discussed, but he was too shy to open his lips in debate. It did not seem as though he had anything worth saying. He was deeply interested in politics, and sometimes had fond dreams of adopting a political career, but reflected that his father was too poor to enable him to translate his dreams into reality. Besides, he was not sure which side he could take in politics, or to which of the two great parties he could belong. For Denis took his politics seriously, and neither party satisfied him. In some things he agreed with the Conservatives, while in others he was a Liberal. He kept these things to himself, however, and, in the main, devoted himself to taking a good degree.

He could not help interesting himself greatly in the Irish question, however, and, as Home Rule was again looming large in the political horizon, he read a good deal of literature on the subject. Indeed, when he saw that Home Rule was one of the subjects down for debate<sup>"at</sup> the Union he read two or three small works specially bearing on the subject. He did not know why, but Ireland had a special attraction for him, and, in a way he could not understand, he had a great longing to visit the country. For long years Ireland had been perhaps the chief difficulty in British politics, and the story of its people was often written in blood. Why was it, he asked, that the Emerald Isle was the open sore of the British Isles? Why was it that in a beautiful, fertile country there should be chronic discontent, squalor, and poverty? One party gave one set of reasons, the other another. "Misgovernment, oppression, cruel land laws, and alien control," said one party, "is the cause of Ireland's woes." "If that is so," said the other party, "why is it that one part of the country is contented, prosperous, advancing?"

It was with more than ordinary eagerness, therefore, that he made his way to the Union Hall on the night when the subject was to be debated, and he soon found himself carried away by the fervour which prevailed. More than this, it seemed to him that he had at last made up his mind on the question. He was an anti-Home Ruler. He believed he saw into the heart of the question. No doubt cruel

laws, oppression of the peasants, misrule at Dublin Castle, and a score of other things were contributory to Ireland's distress ; but at heart the evil lay deeper. The welfare of a nation lay with the people of that nation. Given a strong, self-reliant, determined people, they would rise above circumstances ; they would even make difficult conditions minister to their prosperity. As a fact, the North of Ireland had done this. Belfast was one of the most prosperous cities in the Empire. The same laws which obtained in the South of Ireland obtained also in the North, and yet, while Belfast had become great and mighty, southern towns, having the same advantages, had sunk deeper into squalor and misery. The Irish people were clever, they were generous-hearted, they had sunny dispositions, they had done well in free countries. The reason why the South of Ireland had remained in poverty and discontent was because it had been crushed by priestcraft. Romanist countries, almost without exception, had become decadent ; what more natural, then, that Ireland should follow in the wake of the others ?

Like lightning the words which he had heard when standing on the base of the Martyrs' Memorial flashed through his mind : " Those men died for a great truth ; they died for light and freedom. Their death meant England's birth to a new life and power." That was it. It all lay there ; the Irish people were slaves to the tyranny of priestcraft, and thus they had become weaker and weaker. The priests ruled the South of Ireland, and that rule had meant superstition, poverty, decay ; therefore there was no hope for Ireland until the people had broken their fetters, and stood erect and free !

Then followed another question : Could the British Government consent to hand over the welfare of the Irish people, Protestant and Romanist alike, to the Romanist hierarchy ? For that, so it appeared to him, was what Home Rule really meant. The Nationalist party were in the main Romanist, and as Romanists every man must obey his priest. Giving Home Rule to Ireland therefore meant giving the Roman Church the complete government of Ireland. And he thought he knew what this meant. He called to mind the impressions made upon him as he stood on Plymouth Hoe years before. He remembered

the great British sailor whose monument stood there, and the principle for which he and the other heroes had fought. Suppose the British fleet had failed when the great Armada came up the English Channel ; suppose Philip of Spain had had his way ; what would have become of England ?

A few minutes later Denis was on his feet making his first speech at the Oxford Union. He was a popular man, and so when he rose his friends cheered him eagerly. He was also spoken of as a man of promise, and as he had been silent heretofore there was a certain amount of curiosity as to how he would acquit himself.

At first he was nervous, and his words came with difficulty. Somehow, he could not find language to express the thoughts that were burning in his brain. His friends became uncomfortable, and wished he would sit down. He seemed to them to be floundering ; they thought he had nothing worth saying. Still, it was his first speech, and he was given his chance. Five minutes later the gathering was at white heat. It was no longer a mere academical debate, it seemed as though they, the young students of Oxford, were really settling the question. And Denis had forgotten his nervousness, forgotten indeed the circumstances under which they had met ; he thought only of the subject, of the issues which seemed to him at stake.

Of course it was an immature speech. How could it be otherwise ? He spoke as a boy—as an intelligent, well-read boy, it is true ; but still as a boy. But he spoke as one in deadly earnest, and he spoke as one deeply convinced. He did not deal with Irish finance : that was outside his realm ; to him Home Rule was a great religious question, the question which lay at the heart of everything else. He spoke from the standpoint of the Protestants of Ulster ; should the Government place this section of the community under the control of those whose declared determination it was to exterminate them ? He spoke from the standpoint of the Romanists ; should we place them under a still more complete control of the hierarchy which had ever been the enemy of advancing light and advancing liberty ?

The effect of the speech was electric. When he sat down, even those who disagreed with him cheered him to the echo. From that time Denis was a marked man, and his speech was spoken of as one of the most distinguished

utterances in the annals of the Union debates. Men from all the colleges came to him and congratulated him, and many told him that he must adopt politics as a career ; that this was his *métier*, and everything else must be subservient to it.

Indeed, Denis was the lion of the occasion, and throughout the whole University he was the most discussed man. He was just on the point of promising to spend the evening with some men when someone touched his elbow.

"Mr. Tregony, may I have a word with you ? "

Denis turned, and saw a man whose face was familiar, and yet who nevertheless seemed a stranger to him.

"My name is Russell. Perhaps you may remember it ? I visited your home in Cornwall some years ago."

"Russell ! Yes, I remember," said the lad, with fast-beating heart, for it seemed to him that this man had something to do with a part of his life which he could not understand.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MYSTERIOUS MR. RUSSELL

"I WISH you would come back to the 'Mitre' with me," said Mr. Russell. "There are several things I would like to discuss with you. Can you manage it?"

Much as Denis would have liked to have gone with his friends, he could not resist the appeal of the stranger's suggestion.

"I should like it very much," he said; "but I have almost promised some fellows to go with them."

"I shall be leaving Oxford to-morrow," said Mr. Russell, "and doubtless you will have many other opportunities of meeting your friends. To tell you the truth, I want a talk with you rather particularly; indeed, it was mainly for that reason that I came to Oxford."

"Then I'll try and manage it," he said, and a few minutes later the two were walking together towards the famous hostelry. Neither of them spoke. Mr. Russell, although he had succeeded in getting Denis away from the men with whom under ordinary circumstances he would gladly have gone, seemed hardly to be aware of his presence, and was looking at the various objects on their route in a dreamy, abstracted way. Denis, on the other hand, had so much to think about that he did not feel like talking. Naturally, he was much gratified by the success of his speech, and elated by the praise which had been bestowed upon him. After all, it was something to have made such a good impression on this famous debating society, and he realised for the first time that he had a gift for public utterance. It came to him as a kind of revelation, and the joy that it brought was very great. He had heard of the exquisite pleasure which an orator feels when he knows that he has gripped his audience, and can move them at will, but he

had never known what it meant until that day. He caught himself dreaming of the time when he should be speaking to audiences whose votes would influence the life of the nation ; and, while he laughed at himself immediately afterwards, the dreams were very sweet. But, more than this, he wondered what Mr. Russell had to say to him. He had thought often of his visit to his father, and had asked himself hundreds of times why the stranger should be interested in his welfare. More than once he glanced furtively at his silent companion, and tried to understand his reason for seeking him out ; but Denis was not given to much speech, and he asked no questions.

" Ah, here we are," said Mr. Russell at length. " Quaint old place, isn't it ? I suppose the 'Mitre' has been the scene of important events. Come this way, will you ? "

Denis followed his companion, and ere long found his way to a private sitting-room. When the lights were turned on, the young man looked at his host closely.

Mr. Russell was a little man, very quiet in his movements as in his speech. The crown of his head was bald, and the little hair he possessed was grey. He was closely shaven, save for a fringe of beard under his chin. He looked a prosperous, well-groomed man ; but beyond this there was nothing to denote his condition or position in life. He might have been a lawyer, a doctor, or a prosperous business man—for that matter he might be a squire of some country estate, although Denis could not associate him with green fields and country lanes.

" Well," said Mr. Russell when they were seated, " you've made a big hit to-night, eh ? "

Denis was silent, but the man's words pleased him.

" I was lucky in being permitted to be present," went on Mr. Russell. " Your speech was very carefully prepared, eh ? "

" No," replied Denis, " I did not intend speaking before I went."

" Ah ! but you are interested in Ireland ? "

" Very."

" Any special reason ? "

" No—yes ; that is, I don't know that I have. Of course it is an interesting country, and Ireland has been a kind of bone of contention for generations."

"Yes, yes, it has, hasn't it? Have you read much about it, if I may be permitted to ask?"

"I expect I have, in a desultory kind of way."

"Ah!"

The little man was silent for some time; then he asked suddenly:

"Done much speaking?"

"No, I've never spoken in public before."

Mr. Russell lifted his eyebrows and smiled, then he lapsed into silence again.

"You seemed to be very much in earnest," he went on presently; "anyone might think you spoke from conviction."

"I did."

"You really meant all you said?"

"Of course," and there was a touch of indignation in Denis's voice.

"That's quite interesting," remarked Mr. Russell; then he went on: "I hear you are doing well here."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I have taken the liberty of making inquiries, and the impression is that you'll take a good degree—a very good degree. You are reading for Classical honours, I believe?"

"Yes," replied Denis. "What was the little man driving at?" he asked himself.

"Pardon me for asking," said the stranger after another silence, "but would you mind telling me what you propose doing when you leave here?"

"I hardly know," replied the lad. "When I've broached the subject to my father, he has practically refused to discuss it with me. He says it will be time enough to talk about that when I've taken my degree."

"He says that, does he? Still, I suppose you have your thoughts about the matter?"

"Yes; naturally, I've thought about it, and wondered about it too," said Denis meaningly. The conviction was growing upon him that this man's interest in him was out of the ordinary, and he determined to get some information on what had for years troubled him. "You see," he went on, "my father, as you know, is a farmer; and, although Trewint is a good farm, I've never been able to understand how he can afford to send me here."

"I've heard that farming has been very good these last few years," replied Mr. Russell quietly; "then you are an only child, aren't you?"

"Yes, I know; but—"

"Ah, that accounts for a good deal. Your father is not a talkative man, is he?"

"No," replied Denis.

"Neither is your mother a talkative woman?"

"I suppose not."

"A very valuable asset, Mr. Tregony; very valuable indeed. There's far too much talk in these days."

"Still, I can't help wondering why they refuse to discuss my future with me," replied Denis. "You see, I can't stay here for ever, and—"

"No," interposed Mr. Russell, "you can't stay here for ever. What would you like to be?"

"I'm very fond of the Classics," replied Denis; "but—but I think I'd like to go in for the bar. I'm afraid it's impossible, however."

"Why?"

"I don't see how my father can afford it."

"I suppose it is expensive; besides, I'm afraid you wouldn't be a success."

"No?" and there was almost anger in the lad's question.

"No. You see, you struck me as a very eager, conscientious sort of fellow. I thought as I listened to your speech that you would never advocate what you didn't believe."

"I hope not."

"Well, then, success at the bar is impossible—indeed, conviction is a very awkward thing, very awkward; it closes so many doors."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"No? Well, you see, a barrister's business is to speak to his brief. Right or wrong, he has to speak to his brief. Could you plead for a client when you knew him to be in the wrong?"

"That's hardly a fair way of putting it, is it?"

"Isn't it? But, honestly, could you, if you were convinced that a client was morally in the wrong, continue to fight for him? Would your conscience allow you?"

"No," said Denis quickly.

" I thought not ; I thought not. No ; you would never be a success at the bar. Of course it would be very interesting to eat your dinners, pass your examinations, and be called to the bar ; I'll admit that. It struck me to-night that you might have political ambitions. I heard some of your friends telling you that you ought to go in for politics. Have you ever thought of it ? "

Denis was silent.

" Not that you would ever do as a party man. You'd be always kicking over the traces."

" It's impossible, anyhow," said Denis. " I am the son of a poor man. I could not afford it."

" That is not the insuperable objection as it seems to me. There's another thing more important than that. Of course I'm thinking of politics as a career: simply as a career."

" And that ? " asked Denis.

" Well, I must repeat what I said just now—that you struck me as a fellow with a conscience, as one who would ever try to be true to your convictions."

" But why should that be an objection ? It seems to me that the great thing needed to-day in politics is honesty, conviction."

" Fatal, my dear sir, fatal ! Of course I'm speaking of politics as a career : simply as a career."

" Still I don't understand."

" No ? Of course you are very young, and may change ; but which side do you support in the Westminster debating society ? "

" I'm a Liberal," cried Denis.

" Ah, yes. Of course, you are very young, but at present you are a Liberal. I expect if you had been born a large landowner you would support the other side. But let us understand. You are a Liberal, and the Liberals are pledged to bring in Home Rule for Ireland. But you are convinced that Home Rule for Ireland is wrong. Now then, what would you do in the House of Commons ? You go in as a Liberal, and you hate Home Rule. A Bill is brought in for Home Rule: what line would you take ? "

" I should be true to my convictions," replied Denis eagerly. " I should support my party when I conscientiously could, but I should fight against Home Rule."

Mr. Russell laughed quietly. "Then your career would be destroyed. Neither party would trust you, and you would end in not being able to get a seat. I tell you the House of Commons wants party men, not men with convictions, with consciences. Politics, my lad, is a game—a game in which you must take sides. If you dare to be independent, you may as well order your coffin—that is, politically."

"All the same, if I had the money I'd go in for it," cried Denis eagerly. "You see, I don't agree with you, sir. I believe there's room for the man with convictions; I believe there's room for the man who will be true to his conscience under all circumstances."

Mr. Russell laughed good-humouredly. "Faith is refreshing," he said, "very refreshing, and I'm glad to hear you talk in this way."

"Would you say what you have said about journalism too?" cried Denis.

"More strongly than ever. Of course, in the lower walks of journalism it does not matter. The mere reporter or news editor does not take sides, although the question creeps in even there; but in journalism that counts, conscience, conviction, are fatal. You see, the editor of a newspaper has to consider, in the main, two things."

"And they?"

"Circulation and advertisements—which mean dividends. Suppose you were a leader writer for a Liberal paper, and were told to write a leader in support of Home Rule, what would you do? How many of the flamboyant leaders reflect the writers' real opinions, do you think? How many write with their tongue in their cheek? But, still, the show must be kept up. No, my lad, as far as a public life is concerned, to have convictions, to be conscientious, is fatal to a career, simply fatal. If you were a rich man, and could afford to ignore editors and parties, and Boards of Directors and Committees, and all that sort of thing, it would be a different matter; but for a young fellow who has his way to make and is dependent on the good-will of others, to be true to conscience is to put a rope around your neck."

"You are not speaking seriously," said Denis with

a nervous laugh. He had come to the conclusion that Mr. Russell had a purpose in talking in this fashion.

"Quite seriously, my dear sir. You see, I am getting an old man now, and have seen a good deal of the show of life. It does me good to see a young fellow with enthusiasm, with convictions, and—and—a conscience, but they don't pay. And life is a matter of barter."

After this both men sat silently for nearly a minute. Denis was trying to understand why the stranger had invited him to his hotel. Up to the present he seemed to have had no purpose in doing so. What he had said to him might have been said to almost any other student; but the older man's face was in no way an index to his thoughts.

"I think I must go," said Denis at length; "it is getting late."

"I suppose it is," replied Mr. Russell; "yes, I suppose it is."

"There is nothing further you wish to say to me, I suppose?"

"No, I don't know that there is. It was very good of you to come with me, and I am very glad to have had this chat with you."

Still Denis lingered. "There's nothing you—you wish to tell me, I suppose?" he stammered awkwardly.

Mr. Russell looked at him keenly. "What can have led you to suppose such a thing?" he asked.

"You—you came to Cornwall to see my father," replied the boy; "and—and—well, you said you had come to Oxford to have a chat with me."

"Did I say that? Perhaps I did; and we've had a chat, a most interesting chat. Will you have some refreshments?"

"No, thank you."

"Ah, well, perhaps it's just as well. I am pleased to hear that your conduct here is most exemplary. By the way, you have no matrimonial entanglements, I hope?"

The man's question angered him, otherwise he might have shown some confusion. "No," he replied, "I have no matrimonial entanglements."

"That's right, that's right. You have my best wishes for your future, Mr. Tregony. Good-night! Yes, upon my word, it is later than I thought."

He accompanied him downstairs, and went to the door with him.

"Good-night, my young friend," he said, holding out his hand. "What a fine night it has become—what Scotch folk call a night of stars. You think you would like to be a barrister, eh—as a sort of stepping-stone to a political career? Well, a political career is very exciting, especially if you can get into what is called 'the swim'; but you are sadly handicapped, sadly handicapped."

"Still I don't understand."

"No, I don't suppose you do. Still, I congratulate you. To be enthusiastic, to have strong convictions, and to be true to them, to be dominated by a healthy conscience is better than a career—God knows that. Good-night! Thank you so much for coming to have this chat with me."

A minute later Denis found himself alone in the street, while Mr. Russell made his way back to the hotel.

"What does he mean?" wondered the lad. "Why did he ask me there? And then he went back to his rooms to ponder over the events of the evening.

Although nothing of importance had apparently taken place, Denis realised as the weeks passed away that the night of the Home Rule debate had made a marked impression on his life. From the time he arose and caught the President's eye in the Union Hall, and walked amidst the cheers of his friends to the speaker's table, he realised that life had become different. It was his first public speech, and it revealed a new world to him. The interest he had aroused, the wild cheering of the men, the intense excitement, and the joy of feeling that he possessed the power, not only of expression, but of moving his fellows, added a new element to his life. He became aware, too, that, instead of thinking of politics in a desultory sort of way, they were of intense interest to him. As for Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bills and other schemes of Home Rule which had afterwards been discussed, he hated them. Home Rule for Ireland was, in the words of a well-known scholar, "a leap in the dark," and more than that, it meant handing over the loyal Protestants of Ulster to the tyranny of Rome; it meant fastening the fetters of priesthood more firmly on to the wrists of the Romanists. It would mean placing

the Government of Ireland in the hands of a class of men whom John Bright had declared to be reckless, unworthy, and disloyal, and it would check that prosperity which was just beginning to dawn on the Emerald Isle. All his early Puritan training, the reading of his boyhood bore fruit now, and he could not help thinking of those who were willing to destroy the union between Ireland and the mother-country as unpatriotic and disloyal.

In another way too that night influenced him. It was true Mr. Russell had told him nothing, and yet he had a sort of conviction that he was more than ordinarily interested in his career, and that it was through him that his father had sent him to Oxford.

Denis stayed at the University four years, and left it a marked man. He had won all sorts of honours, and was assured that he might obtain a fellowship if he so desired. Professors nodded their heads at the mention of his name, and spoke of him as one of whom the nation would hear. Balliol men were proud of him as one who would bring lustre to their historic college. After his maiden speech at the Union his services were in constant request, and no man in the University was more eagerly heard and discussed.

"And what is your programme, Tregony?" asked one of the professors when he was leaving.

"My father tells me he wishes me to be called to the bar."

"Yes, and then?"

But Denis could not answer his question. He could not understand his father's attitude. He had told him that he wished him to study for the bar, although it was evident that he did not know exactly what it meant; but neither he nor his mother would answer any of the questions the young man asked. On the question of money also the farmer was just as reticent. Denis was allowed, not extravagant, but certainly liberal pocket money, and he was never asked to economise. There was certainly no cause for this, as the young fellow, who felt deeply grateful to his father for all that was being done for him, was never a spendthrift; nevertheless, he knew that the sums he was obliged to spend must, from the farmer's standpoint, have appeared very large.

"You do well, Denis, my boy, that's all I ask of you.

There's nothing in farming, nothing at all. The Almighty has given you brains, and I'm thankful that I'm able to give you your chance. I hear great things of you from Oxford, and I've been told that the bar is a fine calling."

"But, father," urged Denis, "even when I'm called I may be years before I get a brief, and the expenses will be heavy."

"Yes, I know that; but I trust you, my boy. You won't throw away money, I know that; and, knowing that I have no money to leave you, and that you will have only yourself to depend on, you won't let any grass grow under your feet."

"The great wonder to me, father, is how you could afford to send me to Oxford."

"I'm a great believer in education," replied the farmer evasively, "and I made up my mind years agone that you should have your chance if you had the brains. And I don't fear for the future. I shall be able—with care, of course—to help you till you get a footing, and after that all will be plain sailing. Why, think of Sir Charles Russell and Sir William Harcourt; I've heard as how they could make as much as £20,000 a year at the bar."

Denis had never seen or heard of Lenore since the time she had entered the motor-car at the Martyrs' Memorial; nevertheless, she continued to be a great factor in his life. Often when thinking about her he would try to decide in which part of the country she lived, what her position in life might be, the kind of man her father was, and so on; but his thoughts would never take tangible shape. It was only at night-times in his dreams that she was real. Then his vision seemed clearer, and the things which he tried to visualise through the day took shape. But it was always away from home that he saw her—away among lakes and mountains and verdant fields. But there was always a strange barrier between them; what it was he could not tell. It was invisible, but it was impassable, even although she was ever beckoning him to her side.

"She is somewhere, somewhere," he would say to himself in his waking hours, "and some day I shall meet her again. And if I do, I will not lose her."

Directly after he was called he arranged to go and spend a week or two with his father before returning to London

to commence the term in earnest. An old Oxford friend was staying with him, and was leaving him that day for his home in the North, and Denis had arranged to see him off at Euston before starting for Cornwall, which he intended to do by the midnight train.

"What time does your train leave, Denton?" he asked his friend, as they got into a cab together.

"Eight o'clock," replied Denton. "Please don't come with me if you are pressed for time."

"It's all the other way," cried Denis; "the difficulty with me will be to fill up the time before my train starts."

He saw his friend off, and was preparing to leave the station, when he heard a voice close to him that thrilled his every nerve. He turned, and saw that he was only a few feet from the girl whose face haunted him day by day and night by night. It was now between two and three years since he had last seen her, and he realised that she had grown from a child to a woman. In one way she had scarcely changed at all, but in another she was entirely different. Her eyes were still those of a child, but a woman looked out of them.

"This way, miss," said the porter, and she followed him with a girl who was evidently her maid. Denis, who did not know what he was doing, kept them in sight. He saw her enter a first-class carriage, and heard her speak to someone, but what she said he did not know."

"Train leaves in four minutes, miss," said the porter; "hope you'll have a good journey." The man turned away with a smile on his face. Evidently his tip had pleased him.

"Where's that train bound for?" asked Denis.

"Holyhead, sir. Irish boat express."

"And it leaves in four minutes?"

"Yes, sir."

"With fast-beating heart Denis walked to the booking office, and then entered the train a few seconds before it left the station.

"No," he said to himself, "I'll not lose her again."

## CHAPTER VI

### IRELAND AGAIN

BY the time the train reached Willesden Junction Denis realised the madness of what he was doing. To get on an express train bound for Holyhead in order to follow a young girl to whom he had never spoken, and whose name he did not even know, was, he knew, the act of a lunatic. He had no luggage, he had only a few pounds in his pockets, and, beyond the fact that she was in a train bound for Holyhead which was timed to catch the boat for Ireland, he had not the slightest idea of Lenore's destination.

Still, he did not repent. He felt that he was near her, that the train that carried him carried her also, and he hoped that in some way, he did not care how, an opportunity would be given him to render her some service, and perhaps to gain speech with her. He could not help feeling that she was aware of his existence. How could it be otherwise when scarcely an hour passed, either when he was sleeping or waking, that the vision of her face did not appear to his mind's eye? His intense thought of her must compel her to think of him.

When the train had reached Rugby he started to walk along the corridors. He had a rough idea where her carriage was situated, and he hoped that he might see her. So, with a fast-beating heart he made his way towards her. Most of the blinds were drawn; evidently the travellers were trying to sleep, and he feared that she too might be hidden from him, or, possibly, she had gone into the sleeping saloon. Still, he did not give up his search, and in a few minutes he was rewarded.

She was alone in the carriage save for the maid he had seen and a middle-aged lady whose relationship to her he could not decide. This lady was sleeping profoundly;

the maid was trying to read a sixpenny novel. But Denis took no heed of them, his eyes were riveted on the face of Lenore, and, by standing back somewhat from the door of her compartment, he could watch without being seen. He did not realise that he was acting a somewhat undignified part, every other thought was swallowed up in the fact that he stood close to the girl who had so completely filled his life.

How he longed to open the door no one but himself knew. To be with her, to hear her voice, to touch her hand—that was heaven. Who she was, what she was, he knew not, cared not. She was Lenore, that was enough ; nothing else mattered. Nevertheless, she appealed to all that was noble within him. Her eyes suggested nothing but purity, her presence made the world beautiful. For years she had been the dream of his life, and through her all life had been glorified.

Of course all this was the rhapsody of an impressionable youth. Nearly every lad is the victim of a pretty face, and most men of mature years laugh at the dreams and loves of their boyhood. Let this be said to Denis's credit anyhow—for years he had dreamed of her, made plans concerning her, longed for her. At times the vision of her face had grown dim, but the thought of her had never left him. He had grown from a lad of seventeen to a young man of twenty-two since his eyes had first looked into hers ; but never once had he thought of another. While other youths of his acquaintance flitted from one love to another, as a bee flits from flower to flower, his heart had remained true to this fond fancy of his boyhood. Her influence over him too had been beautiful and good. He often thought of the night in Oxford when her face appeared to him as an angel of light, and saved him from sullying his life by sin.

Still, as he told himself again and again, it was madness for him to follow her, madness to fancy that he could be anything to her ; all the same, he stood in the corridor and watched like one entranced. He was near her, and, no matter whither she went, he would follow her.

Oh, how beautiful, how beautiful she was ! He could only see her profile because she was looking out of the window into the night, but he knew she was dreaming.

Sometimes her face lit up with joy, and he saw smiles play upon her lips, and at another she seemed to be moved to sorrow. Oh, that he might share in her sorrow, and rejoice in her joy! So forgetful was he of what he was doing that he stepped to the front of the window that he might obtain a better view of her face. The train rocked violently, and he caught hold of the door to steady himself; then their eyes met.

A moment later he hurried back to his own carriage, ashamed of himself. He had been guilty of prying upon a young girl's privacy, and this had drawn an angry look upon himself.

The train stopped at Crewe, and he watched carefully for fear she should alight there, but he assured himself that she did not. It was past midnight when they reached Chester, and he felt sure she would remain on the train. It is true he looked to see if she were among the passengers who got out there, but she was nowhere visible. He made up his mind that she was going to Ireland, and his heart thrilled at the thought. It was the country he most loved, the country whose interests lay nearest his heart.

Yes, he had enough money to take him there, and, although he had fully intended to go to Cornwall that night, he determined that nothing should keep him from following her to her journey's end. His heart was strangely light. The girl whose face had haunted him for years was a child of Erin. She was perhaps on her way home after a visit to England. And he would see her home, he would drink in the beauty of mountain and lake and sky which he had seen in his dreams.

At length the train stopped at Holyhead and he immediately rushed to the vessel which lay close to the platform. He watched the gangways by which the passengers boarded the boat, and, as he watched, his heart grew heavy. Lenore was not there. Of course he might have missed her, although he did not see how he could. It was a bright night in the middle of July, and he could easily distinguish the face of each passenger, but nowhere had he seen hers. Of course there were two gangways, and she might have crossed by one while he watched the other, but this did not seem likely. Besides, he had a sense of loneliness, of desolation; he could not feel her near.

But he boarded the boat, and then during the passage across, he tried to get a glimpse of her. He tramped from stem to stern, and visited every part of the vessel, but she was nowhere to be seen. When the sun rose, England was not visible, but away westwards he saw the shores of Ireland. Why it was he could not say, but he did not feel that he was going to a strange country.

At length they drew up by Dublin Harbour, and he watched each passenger pass along the gangways. No, Lenore was not there. He had undertaken the voyage for nothing. He had come on a fool's errand. For a few hours he tramped the streets of Dublin, and then returned to the harbour. He calculated that he could be at Paddington Station that night in time to catch the late train for Cornwall.

It would be difficult to analyse Denis's feelings as he returned to Holyhead. Although he knew perfectly well that he had been to Ireland, it had seemed a dream voyage, and he could not have sworn that he had seen Lenore at all. He thought of the dreams he had had concerning her, and he remembered that in all of them, while he had seen her plainly, there was ever an invisible barrier between them keeping them apart. Was she, he wondered, real at all? Was she not rather some creature of the mind who had apparently become real to him by the intensity of his thoughts; some ideal of his heart and brain which his will had caused to take shape, but which had no tangible reality?

"No!" he cried, as the boat drew up at Holyhead pier; "she is real, she is somewhere, and I will find her. She must have got out at Chester while I, like a fool, fancied her in the carriage. No, no, she is not a creature of the mind, she is flesh and blood, and some day I shall find her, shall speak with her, shall hold her hand."

He travelled direct to London and then, having got possession of his baggage, he started for Cornwall, and reached home the following morning in time for breakfast.

"We've 'eerd great things 'bout 'ee, Denis," said John Tregonny as he sat talking with his father and mother.

"What have you heard?"

"Oh, that you've passed your examinations in first-rate style, and that you're bound to get on."

"Who told you?"

"Never mind," replied the farmer, "we've 'eerd, and we be fine an' proud. And now you must just enjoy yourself."

"I thought I might help you on the farm," suggested Denis.

"You bean't going to do nothing of the sort. You'll only be in the way. Mr. Dick Retallack was here yesterday askin' 'bout you. He do want you to go to Lelant golfin'."

"Was it Dick who told you about my examinations?" asked Denis.

"How should he know? But I bean't goin' to tell 'ee," and again Denis wondered at his father's reticence.

For the next few weeks he idled away much of his time, and then, with his heart full of questions, he returned to London and settled down to work. Denis did not suffer the experience which befalls most young barristers. Work came to him quickly. The reputation he had won at Oxford followed him to London, and before long it was the means of giving him opportunities which happen only to a few.

Thus two years passed away—two years of successful work in his profession, but otherwise two years that were utterly uneventful. Never once during those two years had he seen or heard of Lenore. Three times she had come near to the pathway of his life, so near that he had been able to see her face and hear her voice, and then it seemed to him that she had gone away into the darkness. She might have gone to the uttermost parts of the earth, or she might be dead as far as he could tell; no news came of her. Never since that night when he had taken that mad journey to Ireland had he seen her. He knew it was no use for him to seek her. He had no data upon which to go. He did not know her name.

But she appeared to him in his dreams, and oftentimes when walking alone at night he felt as though some presence were near him.

"Some day I shall meet her!" he would repeat to himself, and his heart would throb wildly at the thought; but, as day followed day and month followed month, the vision of her face seemed to fade, and again he would wonder whether she were only a phantom of the mind.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that many bright eyes smiled on him, he was utterly oblivious of the charms of women. Wherever he went he watched for her, and more than once he took strange and foolish journeys in quest of her. But they always ended in nothing.

On political matters he could not make up his mind. Broadly speaking, he was a Liberal in politics, but he hated Home Rule ; and, as he saw that the Liberal party was more and more pledged to that course of policy, he felt he could not honourably fight under that flag.

Concerning his fancies that there was something strange about his birth he heard nothing, and he was at length led to the conclusion that all his early fancies were so much foolishness. Of course he was the son of John and Mary Tregony, even although they would never answer the questions he had put to them about his early impressions.

At the end of two years, however, events happened rapidly, events which aroused his nature to its deepest depths.

He had just dismissed a client from his chambers one day when a servant entered.

“A gentleman to see you, sir.”

“Yes, what name ?”

“He would not give any name.”

“He refused to give it, did he ?”

“Well, I can’t say that quite, sir. When I asked him for it, he kind of evaded my question, and said he wanted to see you on an important matter.”

“Is he—a—gentleman ?”

“Oh, yes, I should say so, sir. A little gentleman with a round, nearly clean-shaven face ; bald on the top of his head, and a fringe of grey hair.”

Denis’s eyes flashed brightly. He remembered such a face. Where ? Ah, yes, it all came back to him.

“Show him in, Henry.”

“Shall I ask him his name again, sir ?”

“No, show him in.”

The man left the room, and a minute later Denis saw Mr. Russell.

“Sit down, Mr. Russell,” he said, placing a chair.

“You remember me then ?”

“Perfectly. Rather cold to-day, isn’t it ?”

His visitor seemed rather surprised at his coolness. Perhaps this was because he himself was somewhat excited. For some seconds he did not speak. He looked at the table by which Denis had seated himself, then at the row of blue paper packages tied with pink tape, and again at a fairly large case filled with law books. After this he rose from his chair and walked to the window.

"The pigeons are very tame," he said, looking at the birds, who fluttered around as if wanting to be fed.

"Yes," said Denis quietly. His heart was beating rapidly, but he remained outwardly cool. "People often feed them in passing."

"But they are not so tame as those in the square outside St. Mark's in Venice. There they perch upon your fingers, just perch upon your fingers. Have you ever been in Venice?"

"No, never."

"Ah, you should go. Venice is a wonderful place. Full of romance; just full of romance. Still, it's very nice here. These old trees in Temple Gardens are very pleasant, and the old squares very quiet. Ah, and the old church too—"

He stopped suddenly and came back to the table where Denis sat.

"I am pleased to see you looking so well," he continued.

"Yes, I am very well, thank you." The young man was interested in watching him, and, while wondering with a strange wonder why he had come, he determined to let him state the purpose of his visit in his own way.

"And are you very busy?"

"Yes; I'm fairly busy."

"And that's not a professional formula, as I happen to know."

"Indeed!"

"And how about your conscience?"

Denis could not help laughing. "I think it is all right," he said.

"You know what I mean?" queried the little man.

"You remember our conversation in Oxford?"

"Perfectly well."

"Ah, that's right. And I've been pleased to hear

you've been successful, very pleased. And you've not had to stultify your conscience?"

"No," replied Denis with a smile, "not that I am aware of."

"Then I was a false prophet," said Mr. Russell almost lugubriously. All the same, Denis noted a merry twinkle in his eyes.

Denis did not make any response. He felt quite sure that Mr. Russell had not come to talk with him either about the pigeons at Venice or the ethics of the English bar; but he did not think it wise to show any undue curiosity.

"Could you spare me a couple of hours?" asked Mr. Russell at length.

"That depends," said the young man.

"On what?"

"On whether your business is professional."

"As you understand it, no."

"Then I'm afraid I couldn't."

"I think you will."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I think you will. That is, if you still wish to know what you have been led to look upon as the secret of your life."

Denis Tregony's heart began to beat wildly. What did the man mean? Had he discovered anything about Lenore? No, that was impossible; it was the other matter. Still, he did not speak. He had learnt the value of silence and the secret of waiting.

"May I ask you, therefore, to come with me for an hour or two?" went on Mr. Russell.

"Where?"

"Oh, not far; Lincoln's Inn Fields."

"Why should I go there?"

"To meet John and Mary Tregony; to see the senior partner of the firm of Hereford and MacNiven."

Denis rose to his feet. Mr. Russell had startled him at last.

"My father and mother!" he cried. "Hereford and MacNiven? You mean the lawyers?"

"I mean the lawyers."

Denis turned to his book of engagements. Then he rang a bell.

"Henry," he said, when the man entered, "will you tell Mr. Jacomb when he calls that I am deeply sorry that I cannot see him? A most unexpected and important affair has turned up, which absolutely compels my absence."

"Yes, sir. Shall I tell him the time you'll be back, sir?"

"I shouldn't if I were you," interposed Mr. Russell quietly.

Denis hesitated a second. "I shall be back at five o'clock, Henry," he said, whereupon Mr. Russell smiled.

The two walked together by Temple Church and into Fleet Street, neither speaking a word. When they came to the Law Courts, Mr. Russell stopped.

"The law's a curious business, eh, Mr. Tregony; a curious business? Still, things have happened since Dickens wrote *Little Dorrit*. You as a lawyer must feel that."

"In what way?"

"Oh, you get justice more quickly—more quickly. All the same, when once you get into the grip of the law, the spirit of the old Circumlocution Office is far from dead."

"Have you any special reason for saying that?" said Denis.

"Perhaps I have. These great buildings make me think of it, anyhow."

They passed into Lincoln's Inn Fields, and presently stopped in front of a door that bore the inscription Hereford and MacNiven.

"We'll go right in," said Mr. Russell. "You see," he added, "we're expected."

A few seconds later Denis found himself in a large room which bore every sign that it was owned by a prosperous man of law. But the young man took but little note of this, for coming towards him he saw John and Mary Tregony.

"Mother! Father!" he cried, "there's nothing wrong, I hope?"

But neither of them replied. They seemed ill at ease, and looked awkwardly towards a tall and rather gaunt-looking man who sat at his desk.

"You are not in trouble, are you?" urged the young man.

"No, my boy," replied John Tregony; "that is, not in the way you mean." Then he lapsed into silence, while Mrs. Tregony applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

Denis looked from one to the other, his head in a wild tumult. He felt as though he were approaching a great calamity. What was the meaning of all this mystery?

He turned to the man at the desk. "Mr. MacNiven," he said, "you and I know each other by reputation."

"Excellently well," said the lawyer—"excellently well, although we have not come into actual contact before. Sit down, Mr.—Mr. Tregony, sit down," and then he turned to a pile of papers before him.

The lawyer spoke with a strong Scotch accent. Thirty years of London life had not destroyed the impressions made in his boyhood. He was a Scotchman to the fingertips.

But Denis did not sit down. He turned again to John and Mary Tregony, who were looking at him with wistful eyes, and then to Mr. Russell, whose face, usually placid and rosy with the hue of health, was as pale as ashes.

"Denis, my boy," said John Tregony, "you'll believe it's not our fault, won't 'ee, then?"

"I do not understand," said the young man. "Tell me the meaning of these strange proceedings."

"You bean't our son, Denis, my boy. Forgive us, won't 'ee? We—we only—that is—"

"But we've loved 'ee the saame as if you was our own, my deear; you know that, doan't 'ee?"

Mary Tregony lapsed into the Cornish vernacular as she spoke; then, as if no longer able to control herself, she threw her arms around the young man's neck.

"We was allays afraid you suspected something," she sobbed, "and would have told 'ee, but—but we was told we mustn't."

"Not your son?" said the young man, "then whose son am I?"

"That is the question we wished to talk about," said Mr. MacNiven quietly.

In spite of all the fancies of his youth, the revelation which had just been made came to him as a shock. For years he had practically given up the idea that there was anything strange about his birth, even although there

were many things he was unable to understand. Now, however, when he was brought to Mr. MacNiven's office in this way, and heard John Tregony's confession, his brain reeled. Who was he, and what was the secret of his birth?

A few seconds later Denis was master of himself. All his old suspicions had a meaning now, and the questions he had so often asked in vain were about to be answered.

"We've loved 'ee as if you was our own son, you'll believe that, won't 'ee, my dear?"

"Yes, mother, I know that, I know that," and he kissed her affectionately. "But—but—Yes, Mr. MacNiven, I'm all attention."

"It's rather a strange story, Mr.—Mr. Tregony—yes, I'd better call you by that name for the present—but I think, with care, we'll see daylight presently. If you'll sit down, I'll try and put it before you. You are a lawyer yourself, and so I'll not be obliged to enlarge on many things as though you had no legal training."

"Thank you, Mr. MacNiven, but I want to get at the heart of this matter at once. It appears that I'm not Denis Tregony; who am I? What is my true name?"

"Denis Kildare."

"Denis Kildare. I'm Irish then?"

"Yes, you are Irish."

"Thank you," said the young man. "Wait a moment, I'll get a clear grasp of things presently. I'm Irish by birth, and my father was called Kildare. That is right, isn't it?"

"Yes. Captain Denis Kildare of the Irish Guards."

"Thank you. Is—is he still alive?"

"No, he died when you were a baby. You see—"

"Please don't speak to me for a moment. I daresay I am very foolish, but my mind is a little confused, and I don't see things easily. My father was Captain Denis Kildare of the Irish Guards, and he died when I was a baby. Yes, and who was my mother?"

He asked this question eagerly, and there was a far-away look in his eyes as he spoke. The picture of the beautiful woman of his childhood's dreams came back to him, of the beautiful woman he had called mother.

"Before we leave your father," said Mr. MacNiven,

"I think I had better say something more about him. He belonged to one of the oldest families in Ireland. His people were large landowners, one of the few Catholic families who held land in Ireland."

"A Catholic?" cried Denis.

"Yes," replied the lawyer. "The Kildares have always been of the old faith, and perhaps no family, even in Ireland, have stood more loyally by that faith, or suffered more because of it. Indeed, this fact has been the cause of—of our difficulties."

## CHAPTER VII

### DENIS CHANGES HIS NAME

"THERE has been a great deal of talk about the evil of mixed marriages lately," went on Mr. MacNiven presently ; "this was a mixed marriage."

"You mean that my mother was a Protestant ? "

"Yes, I mean that."

"Is—is she alive ? "

"No, she is dead."

The young man felt as though a cold, heavy hand had gripped his heart. In a way he could not understand, he had felt that the beautiful woman of his dreams was alive.

"How long has she been dead ? "

"She died when you were very young."

Again Denis turned to John and Mary Tregony. The woman was crying quietly. The man was looking at the floor with set, stern eyes.

"Tell me more," said Denis. It seemed to him that his childhood's days were coming back to him ; as though the curtain which hung over the first years of his life were being lifted.

"Captain Kildare was spending his holiday in the North of Cornwall when he met your mother," said the lawyer. "She was the daughter of a landed proprietor not far from Bude. Her name was Trevelyan, Mary Trevelyan. It seems that her father opposed the wedding. He objected to Captain Kildare on religious grounds. The young people, however, would not listen to your grandfather. They ran away together, and were married in a Registry Office. They were said to be very much in love."

In spite of himself, Denis's heart became lighter. The thought of his father and mother defying everyone and everything for love appealed to him. Again he pictured

the face of the woman of his dreams, and he felt sure that the story was true.

"Captain Kildare was not a rich man," went on the lawyer. "He was the third son, and as the land was entailed his prospects were by no means bright—besides, his father was alive. He had his Army pay, not a very large amount, and an allowance his father made him. These sums added together were by no means sufficient to keep a wife."

"Did my father and mother remain in Cornwall?" asked Denis eagerly. "And how is it that I came to—to be looked upon as—as Denis Tregony?"

"We will come to that presently," said Mr. MacNiven. "I naturally wished to deal with the important matters first."

For the first time during the interview Mr. Russell's face puckered into a smile. He knew Mr. MacNiven well—knew that, as far as he was concerned, the real interest of the case lay in the disposition of property. Denis's mind, however, did not run in this direction at all. He was thinking of his father and mother and what happened to them. He was wondering, too, how John and Mary Tregony came in. The lawyer's interest lay in the Kildare estate; Denis thought only of people.

"It seems that your father's father had made plans for his third son," went on the lawyer; "indeed, he had gone far to make an arrangement with a friend of his that Captain Kildare should marry his daughter. You will easily see, therefore, that when he heard that he had married a Protestant girl in Cornwall he was very angry."

"Did—did my father tell him then?"

"Immediately after your father's marriage he took his wife to Tintagel. They stayed at the 'Wharncliffe Arms,' an old-fashioned inn. While there he wrote his father telling him what he had done. At first the old gentleman was very angry, and threatened to stop his allowance. He did not carry out his threat, however. He eventually wrote to him, and demanded that he should bring his wife to Ireland so that he might see her. You see, the son had pleaded very hard with his father, enlarging upon his wife's beauty and goodness, as well as upon his passionate and undying love.

"I may say here that while your father was staying

at Tintagel he narrowly escaped drowning; indeed, he would have been drowned but for our friend here, Mr. John Tregony."

"He was also staying at Tintagel then?"

"He was staying at Tintagel, and Captain Kildare took a very strong fancy to him. This was natural, as you can at once see."

"Yes, yes," cried Denis, "but please come to the point. Why have I been kept in ignorance all these years? Why was I parted from my—mother when I was two or three years old?"

"All in good time," replied the lawyer quietly. "This, as you will see presently, lay at the crux of the whole difficulty. As I told you just now, your grandfather eventually wrote to your father, demanding that he should bring his wife home."

"To Ireland?"

"To Ireland. When your father first introduced his young wife, the old gentleman fell in love with her at first sight. Her beauty and goodness charmed him, and everything seemed to be on the way to a satisfactory settlement—that is, as satisfactory as the marriage of a couple of young people who have no prospects can be satisfactory. But this did not last long. Two facts leaked out which threatened to destroy everything."

"Yes, what were they?" asked Denis eagerly.

"First, your grandfather realised that your mother was a Protestant, and, second, it came out that the wedding had taken place in a Registry Office. You must understand that old Mr. Kildare was a Roman Catholic of the extreme order. As I told you, the family had strongly upheld their faith for many generations; they had suffered for it, and held the strictest notions concerning it. Therefore he bitterly resented his son marrying a Protestant, while the fact that the wedding had taken place in a Registry Office made the offence doubly black. All your mother's beauty and goodness could not atone for it. It was not a wedding at all, he declared, for, although the *Ne Temere* decree was not at that time in force in the Roman Catholic Church as far as Great Britain and Ireland were concerned, he maintained that there could be no true marriage unless it was blessed by the Church."

Denis's eyes hardened at this, and his heart became bitter ; he saw whither the narrative was tending.

" Personally, I hold that mixed marriages are a mistake," went on Mr. MacNiven, " but that is by the way. In this case it led to—all sorts of difficulties. The upshot of the affair was that your paternal grandfather declared that the only conditions on which he would be reconciled to his son were these. First, he demanded that your mother should change her faith, and, secondly, that they should be married again according to the rites of the Roman Church."

" And—— ? " cried Denis eagerly.

" Your mother refused," said Mr. MacNiven grimly.

Denis gave a sigh, as if of relief. It seemed to give him joy to know that his mother did not yield.

" And then ? " he asked, " what then ? "

" You will see that the young people were in an awkward predicament. Your mother's father was so angry with his daughter at having married the man of whom he strongly disapproved that he had forbidden his daughter ever to enter his house again, and refused to have any further intercourse with her, while your father's father demanded conditions that your mother would not comply with. She loved her husband as her own life, she said, but she could not change her faith at the bidding of anyone. She was convinced that her Protestant beliefs were true, and until it was proved to her that they were not true, she should stand by them. In this," added Mr. MacNiven with more warmth than he had yet spoken, " I, as a strong Presbyterian, agree with her.

" As for the other stipulation, she refused to comply with it with more indignation than ever. To do this, she said, would be to tacitly admit that she was not her husband's wife, and that she had been living in sin. She had been duly married, she declared, and she would not insult the vows she had taken, nor confess to the invalidity of her marriage by going through another ceremony which would be only a mockery."

The eyes of the young man flashed with joy. He always loved the memory of the beautiful woman who had haunted his childhood; now that memory became sacred to him.

"But my father," cried Denis, "what did he say? What did he do?"

"Your father had, of course, been strictly trained in his father's faith," replied the lawyer. "In the first flush of his love for your mother he had apparently forgotten the claims of his creed, and had not only ignored the fact that she was a Protestant, but had consented to be married at a Registry Office. On his return home, however, he fell under the spell of his early faith. The parish priest pleaded with him, and, I suppose, commanded him to compel his wife to fall in with his father's behests. I suppose, too, that he pleaded very hard with his wife; but he respected her faith, and did nothing to force her. He pleaded with her on the ground that it would put an end to their difficulties, that his wife would be gladly received in his father's home, and that an increased allowance would be made to him. As I said, however, he used no undue influence. Even if his father disinherited him, he said, and he were driven from home, he would be true to his wife, whom he loved more dearly every day."

"Thank God for that!" cried Denis. "Well, tell me the rest quickly."

"It seems that old Mr. Kildare was loth to take any extreme steps. Your father was a favourite son, and, in spite of everything, he continued to make him an allowance. He would not allow your mother to stay at Kildare Castle, however, and so the young people took lodgings in the vicinity of your father's regiment. I think," added the lawyer quietly, "that old Mr. Kildare believed that by judicious management your mother would be led to yield. Indeed, he went so far as to hint that he might be disposed to respect your mother's wishes on one understanding."

"And that?"

Mr. MacNiven was silent a few seconds, and then he went on quietly:

"It was to the effect that if any children should be born they should be baptised into the Roman Catholic Church, as well as trained in that faith."

Denis was silent, but he looked eagerly into the lawyer's face.

"Evidently your mother was a woman of strong conviction," said the Scotchman slowly. "She refused."

Again the eyes of the young man sparkled. If he had cherished the far-off memory of the beautiful vision of his childhood, he reverenced it now. Mr. Russell, who had been watching him closely, saw his lips quiver, while his hands moved nervously.

"Of course there is more to tell?" Denis said presently.

"Yes, there is a great deal more," replied the lawyer. "A great deal that is strange."

"Please go on."

"A distant relative left your father a sum of money," said the lawyer, looking at some notes before him. "It was not a large sum, but sufficient to enable your father to pay off certain debts he had contracted, and to send a small sum to our friend John Tregony here. On the strength of that sum our friend got married, and took a small farm in the parish of Altarnun, in Cornwall. I don't suppose you remember much about it; it is situated in a lonely valley on the Altarnun moors."

"I remember it," replied Denis, looking at John and Mary Tregony. "It is all very dim to me, but I remember it."

"Your father and mother lived in Ireland for some months," went on the lawyer. "I think I told you he had lodgings in the town where his regiment was stationed, but whether Mr. Kildare continued his allowance is not quite clear. I am inclined to think he did."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because there are proofs that your father corresponded with him, and because he continued to beseech your mother to be privately married by a priest. Your mother continued to refuse."

"Did they live happily together?"

"I should say that on the whole they did. Of course the marriage question meant constant friction, but your father loved your mother very dearly, and but for ecclesiastical influence would never have troubled about the differences in their faith. Indeed, I am inclined to think your father was becoming resigned—as much as one could be resigned in the circumstances—to an estrangement from his father, when new complications arose."

"And they?"

"You were born," replied the lawyer, "and I find that

your birth was duly registered. I have a copy of the certificate here. It is in order."

Mr. MacNiven spoke in tones of satisfaction. Evidently this matter brought him pleasure. He passed a document to Denis, which the young man read eagerly.

It gave him a curious sensation. To him it was very strange that he should see the particulars of his birth as attested by an unknown man in an unknown town in Ireland. A picture of himself lying unconscious in his mother's arms came to him, and he wondered concerning her thoughts and fancies as she held him to her heart. Oh, if she had only lived!

He handed back the document to the lawyer. He was trying to keep his mind clear, so that he might have correct understanding of the events which the gaunt old Scotchman was placing before him in cold, businesslike tones.

" You mentioned complications," remarked Denis: " what were they ? "

" It's very strange, isn't it ? " said the lawyer, " but there's scarcely a question on earth but that the religious difficulty comes in. You hadn't been born a week before your father insisted on your being baptised into the Roman Catholic Church."

" My father insisted ? "

" Yes, your father insisted. The faith of many generations, the influence of early life, and the religious training to which he had been submitted proved stronger than your mother's objections."

" And my mother—did she continue to object ? "

" She was very ill ; but when she was asked to give her consent she refused. She was regarded as unreasonably obstinate."

" Well," asked the young man as the lawyer paused, " what then ? " Even although he was greatly excited by the narrative, he could not help picturing the battle that was waged about him, while he was oblivious to everything.

" It seems that your grandfather—that is, your paternal grandfather—visited his son accompanied by a priest, and that you were baptised."

" Against my mother's wish ? " and there was a hard look in Denis's eyes.

"I believe that your health was precarious," remarked the lawyer drily; "indeed, the nurse had doubts as to whether you could be reared. It was considered therefore that your soul was in danger. You know what Roman Catholics believe about the fate of unbaptised children if they happen to die. Added to this, it is a law of the Roman Church that in all cases of mixed marriages the children be reared in that faith. Your mother's objections were therefore ignored. Had you been a girl it might have been different. Time was in the case of mixed marriages when the matter of sex determined the religion. If the father was a Protestant and the mother a Roman Catholic, the male children were reared as Protestants and the girls as Catholics, and vice versa. In this case, you see, you were of the same sex as your father, who was a Roman Catholic, and therefore the Church had a double claim upon you. Anyhow, you were baptised into the Roman Catholic Church."

Denis shrugged his shoulders, and in spite of himself a curious smile played around his lips. It might seem as though the drama of his childhood, when he, although unconscious of the part he played, was the principal character, amused him.

"Then I am Roman Catholic?" he said with a laugh.

"Canonically, whatever that may mean, you are a Roman Catholic."

"But my mother?"

"Your mother was very ill, dangerously ill, in fact, and the baptism took place without her knowledge. It was thought best to keep her in ignorance."

"But when she got well?"

"I am afraid that an estrangement sprang up between her and her husband. I cannot give any particulars, but I gather that this was the case. I am afraid that such a happening is a very common result of mixed marriages, especially when children are born."

There was silence for a few seconds. The lawyer was looking at his notes, as if preparing to enter upon a new phase of his narrative, while Denis was thinking deeply over what he had heard. He had become very pale, and in his eyes was a haunted look. Perhaps this was no

wonder. To hear such a revelation concerning his own life was somewhat startling.

As for John and Mary Tregony, they had seemingly forgotten their own part in the drama, as they listened to the dry, matter-of-fact tones of the lawyer. Mr. Russell, however, was keenly alert, as if expecting that he was presently to appear on the stage.

"When you were between one and two years old your father died," went on Mr. MacNiven quietly. "It seems that he took cold and died of double pneumonia. You were by this time a little chap just beginning to run about, and had evidently recovered from any ailments of your early childhood. Your mother, too, was well, and comparatively happy, especially as nothing had been said to her concerning your religious future after she had been told of your baptism. I imagine that she believed her husband looked upon baptism as a necessary formula, and, once administered, she needed to trouble no more about it. At any rate, she determined, in spite of what had taken place, that you should be trained in her own faith.

"Shortly after your father's death, however, she found out her mistake. Old Mr. Kildare seemed to assume a kind of proprietary right over you, saying what should and what should not be done. Added to this, your mother had, in obedience to your father's dying wish, taken up her residence at Kildare Castle, and was thus under his influence and largely under his control. Your mother was not long in seeing that you would be practically taken from her, and, of course, trained in the religion which by this time she had learnt to fear. I am afraid I cannot go into any particulars concerning this, as my information is, naturally, very meagre; but, from all I can gather, there were many stormy scenes. All the Kildare family were, as I told you, passionate adherents to their faith, and would not yield an inch, while your mother was a high-spirited girl, who had strong determination and would not be cowed.

"This also must be borne in mind—old Mr. Kildare had your mother at a great disadvantage. She was dependent on him for every penny, and, if she followed her natural inclinations and went into the world to earn her

own living, she would be obliged to leave you with your grandfather.

"I think I told you that her father had so disapproved of her marriage with Captain Kildare that he had completely cast her off, and that, as a consequence, she was seemingly without resource. At length, however, she determined to swallow her pride, and she wrote to her father, telling him the whole story."

It was at this juncture that Mr. Russell shifted his chair closer to the lawyer's. Hitherto he had appeared to occupy a somewhat detached position ; now, however, he became alert and eager.

"Is my grandfather alive—that is, my mother's father ?"

"Yes, he is alive," replied Mr. MacNiven, "but we will come to that presently. From what I can gather, Mr. Trevelyan is as convinced a Protestant as Mr. Kildare was a Roman Catholic, and his daughter's letter appealed to him very strongly. It is to be doubted whether even his love for your mother would have caused him in any way to relent, however, if that had been the only force at work. But it was not. The fact that she had defied Mr. Kildare on the question of religion, and was anxious that her son should be removed from the influences of Mr. Kildare's house, gratified him greatly. It is possible that you will meet your grandfather some day, and then you will discover that he is what is called a strong character. Indeed, from what I know of him, I should judge that he had Scotch ancestors."

"Anyhow, my mother wrote to him," said Denis. He seemed less interested in the characteristics of his mother's father than in the narrative of events.

"Your mother wrote him, and received a characteristic reply. It may be summed up in this way :

"First, he refused to take his daughter back, at least at that time. He had made a vow at the time of her marriage that she should no longer be a daughter of his. She had disobeyed him, she had defied him, and she had linked her life with a man whom he utterly disapproved. Therefore his door was for the time closed against her. She had chosen her husband's home in preference to his, and she must abide by her decision, as he should abide by his.

"Second, he would help her to bring up her child under Protestant influence, but he would not receive him into his house. The son of this 'worthless Irishman' had no claim upon him, he said, but for the sake of his conviction he would render financial assistance. He therefore told her that he was disposed to set aside a sum of money for her boy, on condition that he could be trained in England, away from Popish influences.

"I need not go further into this, except to say that presently your mother consented to an arrangement that you should be taken into the home of Mr. John Tregony and reared as their child. The truth is, your mother discovered that attempts were being made to rob her of her child so that he could be brought up according to Mr. Kildare's ideas. You will presently have access to certain correspondence that will make all clear to you," said the lawyer by way of parenthesis, "but I am giving you this rough outline that you may know how things stand."

"Then my fancies were true after all," cried Denis.  
"My mother did bring me to England?"

"Yes, your mother did bring you to England, but not without difficulty," replied Mr. MacNiven in matter-of-fact tones. Indeed, during the whole of his recital he spoke as if the question under consideration were a mere matter of buying and selling of stock. "The truth was the Kildares suspected that your mother had some plan about you which she was secretly carrying out, and as a consequence you were taken away from her."

"I was taken away from her?" repeated the young man in a dazed kind of way. He had a difficulty in understanding the drama of his early life.

"Yes, you were taken away from her, and for a time your mother despaired of ever getting hold of you. But your mother was not one who was easily defeated. She at length found you, and secretly took you to England."

"Secretly?"

"Yes, secretly. It seems that old Mr. Kildare claimed to be your lawful guardian under your father's will, and therefore she had to act by stealth. She communicated with Mr. Tregony, who came to the boat to meet you, and took you off to Cornwall, he solemnly promising never to reveal the secret of your birth until instructed to do so."

"And I never did," said John Tregony, "neither Mary nor me ever spoke a word. We didn't find it hard to be quiet, for we had no neighbours, and lived alone. We kept ourselves to ourselves, as it were. We never even told my sister."

"This was all done with the knowledge and consent of your mother's father," went on Mr. MacNiven, "and it was he who, thinking Altarnun an unsuitable neighbourhood to bring up his grandson, took Trewint Farm, near Truro, so that you might have the advantage of a good school."

"And my mother, what became of her?" cried Denis eagerly.

"Her father still remaining obdurate, she obtained a situation as a governess," replied the lawyer. "She never saw you again, for she dared not go near you."

"Dared not go near me?" cried Denis.

"No. She had reason to believe that she was watched, and she discovered that the Kildares hoped to find you through her. They felt sure she would go to see you, and made their plans accordingly. That was why she was afraid to go near you. You see, the Kildares were ready to do anything to save a Kildare from being brought up in another faith."

"But—but—" and the young man started to his feet.

"At the end of a few months, your mother sickened and died," said the lawyer. "She had lost her father, she had lost her husband, and she was afraid to go near you. Perhaps these facts shortened her days. But a reconciliation between her and her father took place before she died. Mr. Trevelyan promised that your future should be cared for."

"Then I—I owe my education to—to my mother's father?" cried the young man.

"Yes." It was Mr. Russell who spoke this time.

"Be quiet for a minute, will you?" Denis said, as he started to walk around the room. "I think I am a little dazed; I am like one in a dream. I daresay things will become real to me presently, but I want to think, if I can."

A little later he came to the chair by Mr. MacNiven's side. "I think I have gathered up all the threads now,"

he said, " and I suppose I can guess the sequel to what you have been telling me ? "

" Do you think you can ? " said the lawyer quietly. " Sequels are not always easy to guess."

" I suppose," said Denis quietly, " that Mr. Russell here acted on my—my grandfather's behalf, that he watched the course of my education, and duly reported on it, and that through—through—Mr. Trevelyan's liberality I was sent to Oxford."

" You are not far wrong, so far," remarked the Scotchman. " Mr. Russell occupies one of your grandfather's farms, and acts as a steward to him. He is also your grandfather's most trusted friend, although I have the honour to do a certain amount of legal work for him."

" I see," replied the young man, and there was a touch of bitterness in his tones. " My mother's father has been very kind."

" He has naturally been interested in you," said the lawyer.

" So interested that he has allowed me to grow from childhood to manhood without troubling to see me," replied the young man, coldly.

" I don't think you quite understand the position," said the lawyer. " You must understand that your grandfather's objections to Captain Kildare were very strong. He distrusted him as a man, he was in deadly opposition to his religion, his profession, and his character generally, and your mother, in marrying him, destroyed one of his most cherished dreams. Add this to the fact that Mr. Trevelyan is a man of great strength of will, and hates opposition, and you will understand a little better."

" But what is the immediate reason of my being informed of these things ? " asked Denis. " Has my grandfather at last expressed a wish to see me ? "

" No," replied the lawyer grimly.

" No ? Then why is it that——"

For the first time Mr. MacNiven spoke eagerly.

" It is because, owing to the death, not only of your father's father, but also that of his two brothers, both of whom died childless, you are heir to the Kildare estates in Ireland," said the lawyer.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HOME OF HIS FATHERS

"PARDON me," said Denis after a time of intense silence, "will you kindly repeat that last sentence again? I think I am rather dazed."

He looked around the room as he spoke, as though he expected the man and woman he had called his father and mother as well as Mr. Russell to rise up in protest. But they all sat perfectly quiet. It was evident that everything was known to them before.

As for Mr. MacNiven, he was evidently enjoying himself hugely. In spite of his cold, professional manner, he had a sense of the dramatic, and had so arranged his narrative that what he regarded as the most important revelation should come suddenly and unexpectedly. He cleared his throat as Denis spoke, and again looked at his papers.

"The Kildare estate is entailed," he said, slowly and distinctly. "Your grandfather had three sons, and there were no other children. Your father was the third son. The eldest died unmarried not long after your father, leaving the remaining son, Michael, as the heir. Five years later, old Mr. Kildare died, and Michael entered into possession. But Michael never married, and therefore, seeing he died three weeks ago, you are the lawful heir to the Kildare estates."

"I—I suppose there is no doubt about this?" remarked Denis presently.

"Mr. Russell, who has taken a great interest in the Kildare family, especially since your grandfather died, on hearing news of Michael's illness, made a special visit to Ireland. He stayed at the village close by Kildare Castle until he died, and directly his death was announced he communicated with Mr. Trevelyan and myself. Mr.

Trevelyan instructed me to take all necessary steps on your behalf. I may say that I immediately set out for Ireland, and had lengthy interviews with the Kildare solicitors. As soon as matters were sufficiently advanced, I sent for Mr. and Mrs. Tregony here, and—well, I think I may flatter myself that everything is in order, and you may congratulate yourself on being able to take possession without delay. Of course there are certain formalities that will have to be complied with, but there are no other claimants."

"Then I am heir to Kildare Castle, and to—to—"

"All the lands and properties appertaining thereto. Of course Mr. Michael Kildare left certain personal effects over which I imagine you will have no control. But to the estate as a whole there will be no difficulty whatever. Mr. Denis Kildare, allow me to be the first to congratulate you on your good fortune."

Denis's face was a study as he heard his new name for the first time. "Denis Kildare—Denis Kildare," he repeated to himself again and again. Did he like it better than Denis Tregony? He was not sure. Nevertheless, the sound of it fascinated him—"Kildare, Kildare." It seemed strange, and yet it was familiar.

Like lightning, his mind swept over the past, and he remembered how interested he had always been in Ireland. For years he had been interested in the subject of Home Rule for the Emerald Isle, he had read the history of the country eagerly, and everything in connection with the people had a kind of fascination for him. Now he knew why. He had Irish blood in his veins, his father was an Irishman, and he was altogether a Celt. His own journey to Ireland flashed into his mind. Even then he could not help smiling at it. All the details of that midnight journey passed before his mind's eye, and his heart beat wildly. Lenore's face appeared vividly before him, and then left him. It had always been so, both in his dreams and when he was awake. She had come to him suddenly, and then left him just as suddenly. There had always been some invisible power that had kept them apart.

He became unconscious of the presence of the people in the room; for a moment he almost forgot what he had heard, in the thought of Lenore. His brain was in a

whirl. Facts, fancies, memories, flashed into his mind, and then left him.

He looked at his watch. It was twenty minutes past five. He did not know how long he had been in the room, but he knew he had promised his factotum to be back at half-past five.

"Excuse me," he said quietly, "I must get back."

"Get back?" queried Mr. MacNiven.

"Yes, I must get back. I have engagements. I—I do not think I need be long, but I must keep faith with my clients."

"Are you sure you could do your clients justice in your—your present state of mind?" asked the lawyer drily.

"No, I'm afraid I couldn't—I am too bewildered. But—but I see you have a telephone there, Mr. MacNiven. I had better speak to—to Henry Jennings."

"I'll get one of my people to ring up your number," said the lawyer. "What is it?"

"What is it?" asked Denis. "I'm afraid I've forgotten. I'll look it up if I may."

He seized a telephone directory, and turned to the letter K.

"I don't seem to be able to find it," he said presently.

"No," remarked Mr. MacNiven; "Tregony does not begin with K. Allow me."

A minute later he was speaking to his man.

"Is Mr. Bathurst there, Henry?" he asked.

"He was here an hour ago, according to appointment, sir, but he's gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes, sir. There's no one else to-day, sir."

"Very well, Henry, you may lock up and go. I—I shan't be back."

He hung up the receiver with a sigh. "Excuse me," he said, "but my mind will fasten upon nothing. I feel as though I've been shaken up."

"I think," said Mr. MacNiven, "that we'd better go into the Inns of Court Hotel and have some tea. I'm sure Mrs. Tregony would like some."

Half an hour later Denis's mind was clear again. His bewilderment was a thing of the past. He grasped the

details of the story he had heard, and a host of questions came surging into his mind.

"I want a further talk with you, Mr. MacNiven," he said.

"Of course you do," said Mr. MacNiven quietly. " Didn't you tell me, Mrs. Tregony, that you had to get back to your hotel at half-past six ? "

"Yes," said Mrs. Tregony. " I'm sure you'll forgive me, Denis, my dear, but we arranged to hear Dr. ——, the great preacher. We've heard so much about him that I thought we'd better——"

"All right, mother," said Denis, " I'll call on you about half-past nine. I suppose you are staying at the Western ? "

"Yes, my dear; but, oh, Denis—you—you——"

"It's all right, mother. I shall always love you and father the same."

"Bless you for that, my dear. You mustn't think we doan't love 'ee as much as ever. We do, and we won't leave 'ee now ef you do want us ; but I thought we might be in the way."

"It's all right, Mrs. Tregony," said Mr. MacNiven. "I'm afraid you'll have to stay in London a day or so, and it may be you'll have to go to Ireland ; but I think not. I envy you your treat in hearing Dr. ——, but business is business, Mrs. Tregony."

A little later Denis had returned with Mr. Russell to the lawyer's office. The young man was familiarising himself with the thought that he was no longer Denis Tregony but Denis Kildare, and that his true home was no longer in Cornwall but in Ireland.

"Where is Kildare, Mr. MacNiven ? " he asked. " North or south, east or west ? "

"South," replied the lawyer. "The situation is beautiful."

"Is—is it far from—from anywhere ? " asked the young man.

"It is in a country district," replied the lawyer. "About thirty miles from Cork."

"It's not far from the sea, then ? "

"No, not so very far. My advice is, that you go to Kildare at once and take possession. I have all the papers

here, and I think the lawyers will expect you. You will find Mulligan and Breen very decent fellows. Of course they are very provincial, but not unreasonable. You may find things rather strange," added the lawyer.

"Why?"

"As I told you, the Kildares have always been very loyal to the old faith of Ireland. Every tenant on the estate is a Roman Catholic, and the priests have always found a home in Kildare Castle. This being so, there may be complications."

"I think you told me the estate was not—very large?"

"According to English ideas perhaps, but I can assure you you are not a pauper. Of course it will be for you to get all information from Mulligan and Breen. I asked a good many questions when I was there, but they were not over communicative. They may bring forward objections to your claiming the property; but I don't think they will. They would have no case. I can tell you this: Kildare Castle is a fine old place—rather dilapidated I am afraid, but, from what I saw, charming for situation. You spring from one of the oldest families in Ireland, Mr. Kildare, and your ancestors have always held their heads high. I can assure you they have always looked down upon the neighbouring gentry."

"There are neighbouring gentry then?"

"Yes, there are three old Protestant families living in the vicinity, but I don't think they ever had any intercourse with the Kildares."

"Has my mother's father taken any interest in the matter?" asked Denis, after numerous other questions had been asked and answered.

"He may be interested," replied Mr. Russell quietly, "but he has given very little outward manifestation of it."

"But he must have shown *some* interest," suggested Denis, "otherwise, he would not have instructed Mr. MacNiven to act in the matter."

Mr. Russell smiled. "Your grandfather is not what I should call an easy man to know, Mr. Kildare," he replied—"by no means an easy man to know. He has not asked me a dozen questions about you for the last fifteen years, although he has listened attentively to all I have told him about you. He was also very particular in

telling me never to mention his name to you in any way, when I had—to—well, take an interest in your education, or your future."

"And he has never shown a desire to see me?"

Mr. Russell shook his head.

"I've not been given to many confidences myself, Mr. Kildare, as I think you can testify," and the little man's mouth puckered into a smile, "but Mr. Trevelyan is a closer man than I."

"But he instructed Mr. MacNiven?"

"Yes, he does most of his business through Mr. MacNiven. He has but little faith in local lawyers."

"I will show you his letter to me, Mr. Kildare," said the lawyer, with a smile.

He took a letter-case from the shelf and examined its contents. After a short search he selected a letter and passed it to Denis. "This will give you some idea what kind of man your grandfather Trevelyan is," he said.

Denis took it and read:

"DEAR MACNIVEN,—It seems that my daughter's son is heir to the Kildare estates in Ireland. Please do all that is necessary. Russell will give you particulars.—Yours etc.,

"ANTHONY TREVELYAN.

"P.S.—Please let me know when matters are settled, but do not trouble me with details."

"No words wasted," remarked the lawyer drily.

"And he never asked to see me? Never showed any interest in me?" asked Denis, still looking at the letter.

Mr. Russell was silent for a few seconds.

"He never asked to see you," he said, "but as for showing interest—well, it would be difficult to say, very difficult. Your grandfather is not a man of many words, Mr. Kildare."

For hours they sat talking, and when at length Denis found his way to the Western Hotel, where John and Mary Tregony were staying, he had not only familiarised himself with the thought that he was no longer Denis Tregony, but he had mastered the details of the new situation. He had no difficulty in realising that he was not

the son of John and Mary Tregony. As I have before hinted, he always had misgivings about it, and, as a consequence, the news caused him no real surprise, even although it was very bewildering. What troubled him was that his mother was dead. Deep down in his heart was the hope that he would some day meet the beautiful woman of his childhood's dreams, and the destruction of that hope was hard to bear.

Concerning his real father he had never had fancies or dreams, and the fact that he was dead troubled him but little. Neither had he any affection for his memory. He could not help feeling that his mother's married life had been unhappy, and that this unhappiness had been caused by the difference in their faith. In a way he could not explain, he resented his having been baptised into the Roman Catholic Church in spite of his mother's wishes. In a sense the whole idea was laughable, but in so far as the fact had thrown a shadow over his mother's life he felt angry.

His thoughts concerning his mother's father were of a very mixed nature. On the one hand he felt very bitter towards old Mr. Trevelyan, especially when he thought of his stern, unrelenting attitude towards his mother; on the other however, he was strangely interested in this unbending old autocrat. He laughed as he remembered the letter he had written to Mr. MacNiven. It bore out the character which Mr. Russell had portrayed. He believed, too, that Mr. Trevelyan was an old man who tried to be just in an unyielding, Spartan kind of way.

It was all very strange, and as he walked from Lincoln's Inn Fields to Charing Cross it appeared to him as though he had been dreaming a wild, fantastic dream. But the papers Mr. MacNiven had shown him, and the letters from Mulligan and Breen, were tangible enough, and could not be gainsaid. Yes, he was Denis Kildare, an Irish landlord, and the representative of one of the oldest families in the Emerald Isle.

He knew now why he had always been so interested in Ireland. Of course he ought, according to poetical ideas, to hate England, and to long to make Ireland free from all control by England. But he did not. The story he had heard that very day had revived all his old prejudices. If

Ireland had Home Rule, it would have Rome Rule, and he not only feared Rome Rule, but he hated it.

Yes, he would go to Kildare without delay, and he would take up his residence in the home of his fathers. There would be some difficulty about the cases he had undertaken, but no doubt they could easily be arranged. Plenty of men would be glad to have them. Not that he meant to give up his profession ; but for the present not only his duty, but his inclinations lay in the direction of the land of the Shamrock.

He did not stay with John and Mary Tregony long, there seemed no reason why he should. Nevertheless, he was very affectionate towards them while he stayed at the hotel, and when he left them it was to assure them that the revelations of the day would in no sense alter his love.

The next day Denis had a further talk with Mr. MacNiven and Mr. Russell, also several interviews with solicitors and barristers. He told them nothing of what had taken place, except to say that circumstances had obliged him to be out of England for some time, and that, as a consequence, it would be impossible for him to take the cases for which he had been briefed.

This done, Denis felt himself a free man, and with that freedom came a sense of exhilaration such as he had never felt before. All the romance of the situation became real to him. He was not only changing his name, but his nationality. He was also changing his mode of life. He was going to live under an entirely new set of circumstances. The future was rosy tinted. The year was not only at the spring as far as the month was concerned, but all life seemed to be blossoming with new possibilities. He wanted to go to his old friends and tell them all about it, but a certain reserve in his nature forbade him. There was something fascinating in the thought of going to Ireland unexpectedly, and to see his future home without anyone knowing who he was.

He studied the map of Ireland with an interest he had never known before, and grew wild with excitement as he arranged for his journey. He had determined to leave early on the morrow, but, seeing that he could go that night by the Fishguard route, he felt he could wait no

longer. He had arranged for his work, he had plenty of ready money—as for vacating his chambers, that offered no difficulty whatever. Feverishly he packed his portmanteaux, and ere long found himself in a taxi-cab which was rolling rapidly towards Paddington. A few minutes later he was in the train bound for the coast of Wales.

The day had taxed his strength to such an extent, that, in spite of his excitement, he had been in the train only a few minutes before he fell fast asleep. At first, his sleep was dreamless, but presently the scenes through which he had passed during the last two days came back to him, and mingled strangely with events of which he had no knowledge. He saw an ancient castellated mansion, which stood on high ground, throwing a dark shadow over a heap of squalid huts. In these huts he saw men and women with mad passion in their eyes, and hatred in their hearts, shaking their fists vengefully towards the lowering castle. They were ragged and hungry, and seemed to be but little removed from the brute beasts. As he looked he saw a face like his own looking from one of the windows in the castle. Presently a man came from one of the hovels, who appeared to be well dressed. He stealthily made his way towards the castle and entered it, and Denis saw that he had a knife in his hand. He thought he heard the sound of angry voices, followed by a scream. He felt as though a knife were descending upon him, then there was a mad struggle, a moment of darkness, and then he awoke to find Lenore by his side.

"Follow me," she said, "follow me into a place of safety."

Without a thought of protest he followed her. The path she led him was dark, and difficult to find, while amongst the trees he saw the man from whom Lenore had saved him. Presently all became altered. She no longer looked on him with kindly eyes, but seemed to regard him with suspicion, if not with anger. She also seemed to move further and further away from him. He thought, too, that she regarded his enemy with favour, and smiled upon him. He called to her not to forsake him, and tried to reach her side, but in spite of his utmost endeavours she moved further away.

Then siren voices called him, and he saw a maid,

dazzlingly beautiful, who beckoned him to leave his quest for Lenore. She was a black-eyed, raven-tressed beauty who looked tenderly at him.

"Come with me into the land of sunshine, and song, and love," she cried, pointing to the distant figure of Lenore, "she is cold marble, and incapable of love. No happiness lies in the road whither she would lead. At the end of her pathway is a bottomless abyss. In all your dreams about her she has only mocked you. Have I not spoken truly?"

But he paid no heed to the black-eyed beauty, and kept his eye upon Lenore's figure, which was growing dimmer and dimmer. Still, he would not give up his quest. By almost superhuman effort he at length lessened the distance between them; he thought by reaching out his hand he could touch her. She smiled on him too, and her smile made him think of the dawn. She changed the dark, wild night into a summer morning.

"Lenore, Lenore!" he cried, holding out his hands; but before he could reach her, something dark and awesome came between them, and she was lost to sight.

Turning, he saw the raven-tressed beauty who stood by his side. "Did I not tell you?" she cried. "Come with me to the land of fulfilled desire, come where love is never cold."

A feeling of despair got hold of him, and with it a desire to let the black-eyed maid lead him whither she would. He followed her he knew not whither, until he found himself standing on the brink of an awful precipice. A moment later he knew he was falling on jagged, murderous rocks, on which a black, cruel sea rolled, but before harm came to him he felt himself borne up by a wondrous power; then he saw Lenore far above him with a sad, yet joyous look in her eyes, although her face was as pale as death. He saw her lift her right hand and point to the skies. He tried to call to her, but he was unable to articulate a word. Again he felt himself falling on the jagged rocks, and he resigned himself to his terrible doom. He felt himself falling, falling through illimitable spaces, and then it seemed to him he received a great shock.

"This is the end I suppose," he said, "and with it the destruction of all my hopes."

"Wake up, sir!"

He rubbed his eyes in wonder. "Where am I?" he gasped.

"You are at the harbour, sir. Is this all your luggage, please, sir?"

The sunlight was pouring in through the carriage window, the air was as sweet as honeydew.

"It was only a dream, after all," he reflected; "but how real it seemed, how awfully real!"

He followed the porter to the boat. It was a morning to rejoice in, it was a scene to delight the heart of every lover of beauty. The harbour seemed cleft out of the solid rock, which rose in precipitous cliffs all around him. Above the cliffs he saw that the early summer foliage abounded. It was May, the time was early morning, the air was like the nectar of the gods, the sea was glorified by the newly risen sun.

In spite of his disturbing dreams, his heart grew light and laughter came to his lips.

"It'll be a beautiful crossing, sir."

"It seems so."

"And a beautiful boat, sir. She hasn't been running a year. You'll be in Ireland in two hours."

The porter's words brought him back to the realities of the situation. He was going to Ireland, and he was going to the home of his fathers. The spirit of romance encompassed him, filled him; he was living in some far-off time when nothing was impossible.

"There, sir, your luggage will be all right. A pleasant journey to you, sir, and good luck?"

Denis laughed gaily. "Thank you," he cried, and put a coin in the porter's hand. The man looked at it, and then gave a second glance, for fear he had made a mistake.

"Good luck, sir, and a happy time to you."

Again the young man laughed; he felt very happy. What wonder? Surely few men had more reason than Denis to greet the new-born day with a glad heart. The world was flooded with sunshine and beauty, and the sky of his life was rosy with the hues of the morning.

He bathed his head in pure cold water, and the last remaining suggestions of weariness fled. After his ablutions he sat down to breakfast, and then found his way to

the deck. Behind him lay the coast of Wales, before him was Ireland, and he was going to an old castle, to possess it! What could his heart desire more? Yes, his happiness was complete save for one thing, and he knew that he would never be truly happy until his desire was realised. He wanted Lenore.

Who was she? What was her name other than Lenore? Where did she live? What were her thoughts? He knew nothing. She was almost as unreal as the dark dreams of the night had become, but he knew that his life could never be complete without her.

The boat ploughed its way through the waters, and Denis grew more and more excited as he drew nearer the Irish coast. What did the Emerald Isle contain for him? For long years it had been called the distressful country, it had been the open sore of British politics, and politicians had fought over it, even as snarling dogs fight over a bone. It was the land of poverty, of strife, of superstition, of decadence. And yet it was fair to look upon, and its people were light of heart, and glib of tongue, and quick of wit. What would Ireland do for him?

Then another question came to him, almost like a flash of light:

*What could he do for Ireland?*

It was like a call to duty. He was the heir of an old name, of an old Irish castle, and of lands which had belonged to the Kildares through many generations.

He looked towards the Irish coast again. It was bathed in the light of the morning; it told of infinite things. Cornwall, with its happy school life, its romance, its shaded dells, its wild moorlands and rock-bound coast, was a thing of the past. Oxford, also, with its subtle fascinations, its historical associations, and its classical atmosphere, had sunk into the background of his life. His small successes as a barrister, and all the excitement of intellectual struggle which is ever to be found in the profession he had chosen had become dim. His hopes, his future, lay in Ireland, this land which, in spite of all its poverty, and distress, and sorrow, was still the land of beauty and romance.

It was very fair to him that May morning, this land in which he had first opened his eyes to the light of day. Ever since he had realised the meaning of what Mr.

MacNiven had told him, his mind had been full of plans concerning his possessions. What he had heard was the fulfilment of the dreams of many years ; it, in many ways, satisfied the desires of his heart, but never until now did he realise that his fortune was a duty, that the heritage of an old name was a call to live for the country which gave him birth.

What could he do for Ireland ?

The boat drew into the harbour, and presently he found himself in the train bound for Cork. He feasted his eyes on the fair countryside. Surely, surely Ireland could not be a land of misery, and squalor, and carking poverty. The land was smiling and fair. It was a land of wooded hill and rich dale ; it was beautiful beyond words.

As he passed through Waterford, he noticed the broad river coiling its way down a lovely valley, and on either side of the valley the hills rose steep, green with verdure and fair with flowers, towards the blue of the sky. Surely this fair land which lay smiling in the light of the morning, her broad bosom bare to the sun, could not be the home of dire distress and chronic misery !

Onward swept the train, until presently it stopped at a little roadside station. A porter shouted the name of it, a name that made every nerve in Denis's body tingle.

“ Connella, Connella, Connella ! ”

Denis shouted to the porter, and pointed to his luggage.

“ How far is it to Kildare Castle ? ”

“ Sure, and it's above four moil. It's a car you'll be wantun ? ”

“ Yes ; will you get one, please ? ”

A little later he was on an Irish jaunting car, which was steadily moving towards Kildare Castle.

Presently Denis's heart gave a leap. He saw a battlemented house on a hillside a mile or more away.

“ Is that Kildare Castle ? ” he asked.

“ Yes, sor,” replied the man.

## CHAPTER IX

### DENIS TAKES POSSESSION

I THINK it was natural that Denis should be elated at what he saw. I think he was justified in the feeling of pride that filled his heart. He would have been more than human if he had not feasted his eyes on the rich countryside, and said, almost with exultation, "This is mine." Perhaps his gladness was seen in his eyes, for the driver, who watched him closely, said :

"Sure, and you think it is a foine place."

"I think it is heavenly, just heavenly."

"And it's the best time of the year to see it, too," remarked the driver. "I expect that there's no such place in all England."

"I never saw one that appealed to me so much," replied Denis.

"Ah, but it's in a bad way," and the driver sighed.

"In a bad way! How is that?"

"It's been goin' to rack an' ruin, yer honour. It's little I know about ut, seein' I live at Connella ; but ever since owld Master Kildare died (God rest his sowl, although he was a hard man, and had no bowels of compassion) not a penny has been spent on it."

"No? How is that?"

"Mr. Michael niver cared for it, he just let it go. Sure, and there's only been one gardener there, and it wants four, or Terence Mahoney has no more sinse than a suckin' lamb. Not but what Mr. Michael was a good Catholic, and is with the saints."

Denis was on the point of asking questions, but reflected that under the circumstances it would be scarcely fitting to do so. Besides, he felt sure that further information would presently be forthcoming. It required but little

penetration to see that Terence Mahoney was a gossip, and not only longed to tell all he knew, but to learn why Denis was on his way there.

"There's been a good dail of talk about who's to live there," went on the driver. "Sure, and I've heard many times that Mr. Denis what died many years ago had a son, but I know nothun' for surtun. And it's Mulligan, the lawyer, that niver tells a word. Perhaps yer honour could tell yourself?" And Terence looked at Denis quizzically.

The young man did not speak, but kept his eyes fixed on the old house.

"I expect your honour will be seeun' Mulligan and Breen?" went on Terence presently.

"Why should I?" asked Denis.

"Faith, and you might be an English lawyer who's come to spy out the land."

"And why should I want to spy out the land?"

"Yer honour knows best," replied Terence, thinking he had perhaps said too much.

"Do we pass through Kildare?" asked the young man presently.

"Your honour'll be manen' the town?"

"Yes, I mean the town."

"Yis, it's down the valley there. It's foive minutes it'll take us; and it's Mr. Mulligan's office that we'll pass. You'll be stoppun there, I daresay?"

Denis shook his head.

"I want to ride up to the big house," he replied.

"All right, yer honour," said Terence, looking at him curiously. He longed to ask questions, but something in Denis's face kept him silent.

A few minutes later they came to a squalid village, for it was nothing more. There were not half a dozen good houses in the place. It was in the main composed of miserable cabins, which to Denis, with his English ideas, were not fit to live in. Here and there were new cottages, which betokened some prosperity; but in the main poverty was writ large everywhere.

"It's a foine church," said Terence, pointing to a pretentious-looking building with a high steeple. "And it's a heap of money it cost."

"It's quite new, I see," said Denis.

"Yes, it's foive year old ; there's the ould one."

"Was not the old one good enough ?"

"Faith, and it was all right ; but Father Meharry wanted a foine place, and it is said the Bishop helped him. There's the praste's house, and he nodded to a fairly large building. "And that," he added, pointing to a room over a grocer's shop, "is Mr. Mulligan's office."

"But surely he does not live there ?"

"Begorra, no. Mr. Mulligan's house and main office is in Cork, and I've been tould he took this place and comes here three afternoons a week to plase Mr. Michael Kildare. You see, Mr. Michael hardly ever left the big house."

Denis had made no plans as to what he should do, and for a moment he was tempted to call at Mr. Mulligan's office, and tell him who he was ; but he did not yield to the temptation. He wanted to see his future home without telling anyone of his right to be there.

Presently they left the village, and began to climb the hill towards Kildare Castle. As they did so the view in the southward direction was revealed to them, and Denis saw in the distance a large, handsome house, surrounded by fine park lands.

"That's a fine place," the young man ventured.

"Yis, and it's me that don't know the name of the gentleman that lives there. I know he's a Protestant, and I know he's very rich ; but what they call him I've been tould, but can't remember."

The driver crossed himself as he spoke, and held the reins more tightly.

"Anything happened here ?" asked Denis.

"Faith, I've been tould that ould Mr. Kildare appeared here the night after he died, and that Father Meharry had to lay his spirit. Ah, it's all right ; here comes the praste."

A man dressed in clerical attire passed them. He might be about fifty years of age, and, as far as Denis could judge, was a typical Irish priest. He had a large, kindly-looking face, and answered the driver's salute with a cheery greeting. Denis could not help seeing that the priest seemed curious as to who he was. He did not speak to him, but scrutinised him closely as he passed. When the young man turned after they had proceeded some distance up

the hill, he saw that Father Meharry was standing in the middle of the road watching him.

Presently they reached the entrance to the Kildare Castle grounds, and Denis noticed that the lodge gates badly needed painting, and that the drive was in a shocking state of repair. The lodge itself was very pretty, and covered with climbing roses and clematis, but looked as if it was fast falling to decay. No one appeared as the car passed through, but Denis paid but little attention to this. He was eagerly watching for the appearance of his future home. The car swept along under fine spreading trees, which were rapidly becoming green, and a few minutes later the house burst upon his view. The driver drew up to the main entrance with a flourish.

"Will I be waitin' for yer honour?" he asked.

"No," replied Denis.

He was so excited that he scarce knew what he was doing. It was utterly unlike the house of his dreams, even as the village through which he had passed bore little or no resemblance to the place from which the enemy of his imagination had emerged. He was glad of this. It assured him that his dream had no prophetic meaning, and was only the result of an over-excited brain.

"Your honour is goin' to stay here, then?"

"For a while. You can take down my luggage."

He stood beneath the great stone porchway, and looked around. Yes, the view was fine, and the place itself looked very beautiful in the light of that May morning, and yet it sent a shiver through his heart. It was terribly lonely and fearfully dilapidated. Still, the spirit of romance was strong upon him.

"You needn't stay," said Denis, after his bags had been placed beneath the porch, and the driver had received a liberal fare.

"Your honour'll not be wantun' me to take the bags inside?"

"No, thank you. I'll not keep you any longer."

Terence Mahoney climbed on to the car, with a troubled look in his eyes. He could not make out who his passenger was.

"It's a liberal gentleman, ye are, and may the saints preserve ye," he said.

"Thank you," said Denis, "and it may be I shall want you again some time. I'll let you know if I do."

"Ye're sure ye'll not be needin' me to ring the bell?"

Denis laughed, and the driver was about to make another attempt to learn more about him when the horse dashed down the drive, and he was alone.

"I'm like a man in a dream," he said to himself. "Nothing is real to me. I wonder now—I wonder—"

He turned and laid hold of a rusty bell-pull. Evidently it was broken. He knocked at the great heavy door, and heard the echo of the noise he made resounding through the house. Scarcely had he done so when he heard the sound of voices—men's voices.

"What is the meaning of it?" he asked himself. "Perhaps I was foolish to follow my fancies in this way. I ought to have made an appointment with Messrs. Mulligan and Breen, and asked them to accompany me. Perhaps the housekeeper or whoever is in charge will resent my coming, and refuse me admission."

His reflections were cut short by the sound of heavy footsteps. A minute later the door opened, and a woman of perhaps fifty years of age appeared.

"Excuse me," said Denis, "but—"

"Ye'll be come to see Mr. Mulligan," interrupted the woman, "and he's inside at this blissed minute."

"Ah, Mr. Mulligan is here, is he?"

"Yes, and Mr. Breen, too, as well as siveril other gintlemen. Ye'll be wantun' to see them?"

"I don't know that I'm particular to do so for the moment," said Denis; "I'll lift my bags in first anyhow."

The woman watched him with a look of wonder in her eyes while he lifted his bags into a great stone-paved hall. Denis saw at a glance that architecturally Kildare Castle was a fine building. The proportions of the hall, with its huge circular stairway, were imposing.

"Ye'll be lavin' them here while you spake to the gintlemen?" queried the woman as she looked at Denis's luggage.

"I'll be asking you to take them to my bedroom," he said, and there was a twinkle in his eyes.

"Ye mane—?"

"I mean," said Denis, for he was entering into the humour of the situation, "that I've come to stay."

The woman looked at him with amazement.

"And what might be your name?" he asked.

"Sure, and it's Patricia Malone," she cried, "for so I was christened by Father O'Flynn himself. And it was the name my father and mother (who I trust are both in Paradise, although I've me doubts about my father) gave me, seein' they had no boy that they could call Pat."

"And are you a good cook, Patricia?" asked Denis with a laugh.

"It's cook I did not only for Mr. Michael, but for the old gentleman himself. But who might ye be, and what might ye have been christened yourself?"

"Who am I, Patricia? Well, I'm your new master. What was I christened? I was christened Denis."

The woman was speechless with astonishment.

"My new master?" she cried. "Then ye'll be——"

"The son of Captain Denis Kildare, Patricia."

"May the saints in Paradise preserve me!" cried the woman. "And, but——" She looked at him steadily for some seconds. "Thin, thin——" she cried excitedly; "but, yes, and ye might be Master Denis come to life again."

"Ah, you remember Mr. Denis?"

"Wasn't I a servant here at the time when he brought home his beautiful young wife from England, who was a saint in heaven, for all she was a Protestant, and wouldn't be a good Christian, although all ov 'em tried to make her so. And I've heard that Mr. Mulligan told Mr. Michael before he died that he didn't believe you were ever born, although you are standin' there the very image of both your father and your mother."

"And what is Mr. Mulligan doing here now?" asked Denis.

"And it's I that don't know, although I daren't tell him to laive, for he's been here a lot since the master died. And to think that you should be the beautiful little baby that the sweet crater brought here afther Mister Denis died, and that I should ever 'ave helped her to keep ye bein' a good Christian. It's sure you are that you are the son of Mister Denis, and the swate crater that wouldn't be a Catholic, although she was a saint for all that."

"It's sure I am, Patricia, and I want a bedroom prepared, and my luggage taken to it. But I am getting very hungry

and want my lunch, and I believe we shall be good friends, Patricia."

He laughed as he spoke. The woman's simplicity made him merry, and the circumstances appealed to all that was romantic in his nature. Besides, he was young, and he had been riding several miles in the cool, crisp air.

The woman laughed too, for she had no doubts concerning the truth of what he had said, and the sight of her new master was pleasant to her. He was young, he was handsome, there was a sparkle in his eyes, and laughter in his voice.

"Sure, and it'll be a joy to me to get a lunch for ye," she cried; "but ye'll be wantun' to spake to Mr. Mulligan, I'm thinkin'."

"I think you're right, Patricia," he said. "I'll go and speak to them right away. Show me where they are, will you? and then you can get someone to take my bags to my room."

The woman led the way through a passage, and then stopped before a door, at which she knocked. The sound of men's voices reached them plainly, but what was said was difficult to understand. Several were speaking at the same time, and as far as Denis could judge there was some excitement.

The woman opened the door, and Denis entered.

Five men were in the room. One was standing somewhat in the attitude of an orator, and was declaiming freely. The others were interpolating with remarks more or less relevant. On the long table in the middle of the room were several glasses, some bottles of spirits, a box of cigars, and two boxes of cigarettes. Two of the men were smoking pipes.

Silence fell upon the gathering as he entered. Evidently his coming was unexpected, and from the look of blank astonishment on their faces Denis judged that neither of them had the slightest idea who he was.

"Good-day, gentlemen," said Denis; "lovely weather, isn't it?"

For a moment astonishment kept them silent, then one said:

"Will you be good enough to tell me who you are and what your business is?"

"Certainly," replied Denis. His heart was beating wildly, although he spoke quietly. "My name is Denis Kildare. As for my business—well, I imagine that can be easily guessed."

The party looked at him dumbly; for a moment they seemed to be unable to realise the situation.

"May I ask," went on the young man, with a smile, "which of you is Mr. Mulligan and which Mr. Breen?"

The tall, stout man, who had been the only one standing when Denis entered, stepped forward. "I am Mr. Mulligan," he said, "and that," pointing to a somewhat younger man who was sitting at the end of the table with his pipe in his mouth and a glass of spirits before him, "is Mr. Breen."

"Then I fancy I shall have some business with you, gentlemen," replied Denis.

The party appeared to be utterly confused. Denis judged that the subject of their conversation prior to his entrance was the future of the Kildare estates, for one of the others came up to Mr. Mulligan and whispered something in his ear, and cast, as he thought, unfriendly glances towards himself. For a moment, too, the lawyer seemed perturbed; but only for a moment. His face cleared as if by magic, and he said:

"You'll excuse me, sir, but you came so suddenly that I hardly realised what had happened. Of course, if—that is, you will have—certain papers from Mr. MacNiven?"

"Yes, I have many papers from Mr. MacNiven."

"But Mr. MacNiven has never sent me a line that you were coming."

"No, I did not wish him to do so. But I have everything in order."

He spoke in a pleasant way, and with a smile on his face; but there was something in his eyes which caused Mr. Mulligan to feel rather uneasy in his presence. The lawyer looked rather anxiously towards his companions, and Denis thought he seemed undecided what to do. He noticed, too, a look of antagonism on the faces of the men who had foregathered with the lawyers.

"Might I ask," he said presently, "what these gentlemen are doing here?"

Mr. Mulligan seemed more confused than ever, and appeared to struggle in vain for an answer.

"You seem to have a good many documents here," went on the young man. "I presume they appertain to the estate; but I fail to see what good end can be gained by discussing them before strangers."

"Excuse me, sir," said one of the men who had sat silent during the conversation I have recorded, although he had been staring very hard at Denis, "but I am related to the Kildare family, and—and I asked Messrs. Mulligan and Breen to meet me here."

"Indeed, by what right?"

Before the man could reply Mr. Mulligan broke in hastily:

"Oh, a natural interest in the family;" then, after an awkward silence, he went on, "Of course you'll be showing me the papers from Mr. MacNiven. You see, to say the least of it, your method of—of taking possession is—is irregular."

"I suppose it is," said Denis; "all the same, you were not altogether unprepared for my coming. Here is a letter from Mr. MacNiven as to my identity. As to other documents, of course they will be submitted at the proper time and under—more suitable circumstances."

He handed a letter to Mr. Mulligan as he spoke, who read it eagerly. When he had read it, he looked at Denis again, and as he looked all indecision passed from his eyes.

"And it's glad I am to see you, Mr. Kildare, and it's glad I am, too, to be the first to welcome you to your new home."

Almost instinctively Denis turned to the man who had claimed association with the Kildare family, and saw not only surprise, but anger. Still, he thought it better to say nothing. The lawyer was right in saying he had come to Kildare in a very unconventional way, and he did not wish to arouse antagonism.

"Thank you, Mr. Mulligan," he said. "Perhaps you'll stay to lunch with me. I have told Patricia to get something, and after we have lunched we can go into the various questions which I can see are troubling you. No doubt Mr. Breen will stay as well."

"Thank you, thank you," replied the lawyer hastily and led the way out of the room. "As for you, gentlemen,"

and he turned to the others, "I don't see I can do any more for you to-day."

When they had left the room Denis heard the lawyer expostulating with them.

"I told you from the beginning it was no use," he said ; "the thing is as clear as daylight. You've no case, not a shadow of a case. Besides, can't you see that he's not a man to be played with ?"

"You've turned your back on me," Denis heard someone mutter angrily.

"Not at all ; but even though I consented to meet you here, I told you there was no case."

Again there was low muttering, but the young man could not distinguish the words ; still, although they had moved further away, the lawyer's reply was plain.

"Dispute the possession, man ! Ye can't, ye can't. One of the cleverest lawyers in England has the matter in hand, and the thing is hopeless ! "

A few minutes later the lawyer came back to him again, and Denis judged that he had been passing through a stormy scene.

"Your friends seem very much in earnest," remarked the young man with a smile.

"Yes," replied Mr. Mulligan. "The man who spoke to you, Mr. Kildare, he—he's a distant relation of yours—wanted to see me on a matter of business, but I told him it was no use."

"Rather a curious place to discuss it," said Denis drily.

"Oh, he knew I was coming here to-day. Yes, I know it was irregular, but—but we don't conduct business in Ireland quite in the same way as you do in England," and Mr. Mulligan walked around the room examining certain objects of furniture.

"But Breen will be back in a minute," he went on, "and—won't you have some whisky, Mr. Kildare ? I know Patty, and lunch won't be ready yet. Just a drop, Mr. Kildare—in—in honour of your coming."

"No, thank you, Mr. Mulligan," replied Denis quietly, as he watched the lawyer pour a liberal supply of spirit into a glass and drink it off at a gulp. Evidently that gentleman had been helping himself very freely before he

came. His face was fiery red, and his words were not all enunciated clearly.

He was not altogether enamoured with Mr. Mulligan, and he did not quite understand his attitude towards his *soi-disant* relative.

"I want to keep my head clear," he added, "for, of course, everything is strange to me, and there are many things I do not quite understand."

"Of course; I'll be glad to tell you anything in my power," said the lawyer. "I didn't expect you for a day or two yet, but if there's anything I can do—"

"You can tell me about things generally," said Denis. "I am naturally interested, as you may imagine."

"Where shall we begin?" said the lawyer, casting another look at the whisky bottle.

"I think we'll begin by going outside," replied Denis. "The weather is too gloriously fine to stay indoors." He opened the casement window as he spoke and stepped into the garden. The lawyer, casting a longing look at the whisky, followed him.

"Tell me about my uncle first," said the young man.

"Plainly?" asked the lawyer significantly.

"Certainly. I never saw him, and I want to know everything about him."

"A misanthrope, Mr. Kildare. A man who lived alone, and let everything go to rack and ruin."

"What did he do with his money?"

"The saints know; I don't. I acted as lawyer, and to an extent his agent, but he would have things his own way. I don't say he treated the tenants badly; but for his cheese-paring ways he might have made the estate pay far better. It'll cost a trifle to do the place up."

"You say he saw no one?"

"Except the priest. Father Meharry and he were fast friends."

"Wasn't he friendly with the neighbouring gentry?"

"Michael Kildare friendly with— But you don't understand, Mr. Kildare. You've spent all your life in England, and know nothing about Ireland."

"No, nothing except what I've read; I've come here to learn."

"Just so. Well, first of all, Michael Kildare had nothing

to do with the neighbouring gentry, because he looked down on them ; and, second, because they looked down on him."

"I don't understand."

"No, but you will in a minute. First, he was a Kildare, and belonged to one of the oldest families in the world. Oh, yes, I see you smile ; but your family, Mr. Kildare, sprang from the old Irish kings. I don't say there are not Kildares of more modern stock, but you come from the ancient race. Well, Michael was as proud as Lucifer, and looked down upon what he called the upstarts who can only trace their lineage back to Cromwell's or Elizabeth's days—as a matter of fact, he just treated them like dirt. Then, on the other hand, they looked down on him. They looked upon him as a kind of savage, who, from a social standpoint, was impossible, especially as he had sympathy with the Parnell gang. You see how matters stood then—a kind of mutual contempt. As a consequence this house was avoided."

"I see, at least in part. Why should he be socially impossible because he had sympathy with what you call the Parnell gang ?"

The lawyer laughed loudly.

"Don't you know ?" he cried. "It's this way. Any man in these parts—in fact, nearly all over Ireland—shuts himself out from what is called Society if he is a Home Ruler. And Michael Kildare was a Home Ruler. I do not say he took an active part in politics, but he was a friend and supporter of Father Mehaberry, who is what the Protestants call a rebel. There you have it in a nutshell. I don't know what your politics are, sir ; but let me tell you this : if you are a Home Ruler, and especially if you were to take an active part on that side, every door belonging to those of your own class would be shut against you. The people whom you call the gentry wouldn't speak to you ; they wouldn't notice you if they met you in the road."

"In heaven's name, why not ?"

"You may as well learn how matters stand at once, for I see you don't know. Nearly all the landowners in Ireland are Protestants, and they are what they call loyalists to a man. They boast of being of English descent,

and they hate the thought of Ireland being under a Dublin Parliament, as they hate the devil. Then, again, nearly all the wealthy tradesmen are Protestants, and they all hang together. To say you are a Protestant is the same as to say you are a Unionist and hate Home Rule. Of course there are some Protestant Home Rulers, but not many, and they all look down upon Home Rulers, who are, in the main, Irish Catholics. To put it in another way, it's 'bad form' to be a Home Ruler, and in what are called aristocratic circles you are socially damned if you sympathise with what they call the rebel gang."

"I see," said Denis slowly; "and my uncle became a social outlaw because he had sympathy with Parnell's views?"

"That and other things. I suppose you are a Protestant, Mr. Kildare?"

"Yes, I'm a Protestant."

"It'll be a bit of a shock; in fact, a great deal of a shock to your tenants—and other people, too. You see, the Kildares have always been of the old faith, and for a Kildare to be a Protestant will be like—— Still, you'll be received with open arms by the landed gentry."

"So my uncle was a misanthrope?"

"He spent his latter days in saving his soul. He saw very few people and rarely went anywhere. Of course he'll be missed, but by no one so much as by Father Meharry."

"I suppose he did not keep many servants?"

"There was Patricia, who cooked for him, and Jim Malone and his wife, who kept the lodge in the old man's days. They came up here to live, and the three together ran the house."

"And horses, dogs, and that sort of thing?"

"All went, sir. Ah, there is Breen coming."

They were standing out on the lawn at the front of the house, and Denis looked away towards the house he had noted when driving thither. The day was very clear, and, although it was miles away, Denis saw that it was evidently a large place, and most likely the property of a rich man.

"Tell me about my neighbours," he said.

"Of course you mean the landowners?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Well, there are four families of importance within a radius of a few miles. Of course they are all Protestants, and all hate Home Rule like poison. The bitterest Protestant of the lot lives over there," and he pointed to the house at which Denis had been looking.

"Who are they? What are they called?"

"Faith, and I thought you would have acquainted yourself with that. There are the Kellys, and the Cantyres, and the Clares, and the Tyrones."

"And who lives there?" asked Denis, nodding towards the distant house.

"Sir Charles Tyrone lives there, with Lady Tyrone and one daughter. A very beautiful girl she is. In fact, I doubt whether in the whole of Ireland are to be found many who are more attractive than Miss Lenore Tyrone."

Denis's heart gave a bound, and he felt his head reel.

"Lenore, did you say?" he asked, and he knew that his voice was hoarse.

"Lenore," replied the lawyer.

## CHAPTER X

### DENIS'S NEIGHBOURS

FOR some time Denis did not speak again. Mr. Breen had come up and was speaking to Mr. Mulligan in low tones, but the young man did not heed them. Everything seemed to be swallowed up in the thought that the Lenore of his dreams lived near him. For he felt certain she did. Never, outside of Edgar Allan Poe's poem, had he heard of anyone else called Lenore, and he had no doubt whatever that after years of searching he had at last happened upon her dwelling-place.

He looked steadily at the house, and presently his heart gave a leap. He saw what he thought was a woman's form near the great house, and instantly he concluded it was she. Denis was so fired by romance that everything seemed possible to him.

"It's a fine place," said Mr. Mulligan presently. "Do you know Sir Charles Tyrone by any chance?"

Denis shook his head. "I never heard the name before," he replied.

"A fine man in his way," said the lawyer. "I believe the family first settled in the North of Ireland, in Ulster, in Queen Elizabeth's time, and they took on the name of the county in which they lived. Then one of them was given land down here. Oh! they are great people, are the Tyrones; but the man is a Protestant bigot, just a Protestant bigot. He hated Michael Kildare, I'm told, and I believe he'd disinherit his own daughter if she turned Home Ruler. As a magistrate he's always been terribly hard on the rebels, as he calls them."

"I suppose there's no danger of his daughter doing such a thing?"

The lawyer laughed heartily. "I'm told she's more bitter than her father," he said.

"How old is she?" asked the young man.

"Very little more than twenty, I should think. Oh, yes, a very beautiful young lady, there can be no doubt about that."

Denis still kept his eyes on the distant mansion. He was wondering by what means he could see her.

"And are there no Catholic families at all?" he asked presently; "I mean families of importance?"

Mr. Mulligan shook his head. "No," he replied; "none at all."

"You forget, Mulligan," interposed Mr. Breen.

"Forget what?" asked the senior partner sharply.

"Why, old Patrick O'Hara."

A smile passed over the lawyer's face. "You are right, Breen," he said, "I had forgotten Patrick O'Hara and Rosaleen."

"Who are they?" asked Denis.

"It's difficult to say in a few words," replied the lawyer. "Old Pat is as poor as a church mouse, and yet there's no better blood in Ireland than that which runs in his veins. The O'Haras were great people back as far as the history of Ireland goes. If you've read Irish history, you will know that the O'Haras have been at the heart of every movement for Ireland's freedom and Ireland's glory. Even now there's no man in the South of Ireland who has greater influence than he. Why, I believe that even in Parnell's palmy days old Pat could have destroyed his power if he'd opposed him."

"Where does he live?"

"A few miles from here, in an old broken-down mansion. At one time it must have been one of the finest houses in Ireland; but now it is little more than a heap of ruins. At one time, too, there were thousands of acres of land attached to it, but the O'Haras have been robbed, sir, robbed."

"By whom?"

"By the British Government. The family have always rebelled against England, and have suffered as a consequence. I believe he has less than a hundred acres now; but he's as proud as Lucifer and wouldn't take charity

from a king. He was one of the chief spirits in the Young Ireland movement, and has been hunted like a wild beast by the constabulary. More than once he's been in danger of being hanged."

"Is he an old man?"

"He must be seventy, but he's as vigorous and active as an ordinary man of fifty. He's a tremendous power still, is Pat."

"In what way?"

"Oh! there's no great political movement on foot but what he's the heart and the head of it. He has a way with him, you see. I've seen him frighten a bully by a look—just by a look, sir. Even the priests stand in awe of him. I wouldn't give much for any man's chances at an election if Pat opposed him. He doesn't say much, but when he does speak, every word tells. But you'll have nothing to do with him."

"Why?"

"Oh, you are a Protestant, and, of course, a Unionist, and so I daresay he'll give you a wide berth. Besides, it would never do for you to know him. None of your Protestant gentry would ever speak to you again if you did. You see, he's looked upon as a rebel, and there's no doubt about it, he hates England like poison. So does Rosaleen."

"Who's Rosaleen?"

"She's his granddaughter, and she's as dear to him as the apple of his eye. Old Pat had only one son, who married another rebel's daughter who lived over in County Clare. A wonderful creature I suppose she was; but she died when Rosaleen was born, and Pat's son Terence was so overwhelmed with grief that he also died within three months. So old Pat took her, and reared her at Rathsheen. She's as wild as a colt, as shy as a hare, and as beautiful as an angel. She comes from the old Irish stock, she loves everything Irish, and hates everything that isn't. All the people at Rathsheen worship her."

"Rosaleen; isn't that an uncommon name?"

"It's Irish, sir, and it's looked upon as a name which represents the spirit of Ireland. From what I've heard, Rosaleen would give her life's blood to make Ireland free. She would drive everyone that isn't Irish into the sea."

She wants Ireland absolutely separated from England. She wants her to have not only her own Government, but her own King, her own laws, her own language, her own everything. She speaks Gaelic as well as she speaks English ; she can sing the old Irish songs like an angel, and there's nothing about the country she doesn't know. Ay, but Rosaleen would make a grand Queen for Ireland."

"And, of course, the O'Haras are Roman Catholics ? "

Mr. Mulligan smiled. "In a way she is," he replied ; "but she's a strange creature is Rosaleen, and has thoughts all her own. Of course none of the Protestant gentry take any notice of her ; but I tell you she'd put any lady in the land in the shade. Even Miss Lenore Tyrone, with all her fine dresses, can't hold a candle to Rosaleen. If the two stood side by side, Miss Lenore, with all her fine English-made clothes and her grand English manners on the one hand, and Rosaleen in her Irish homespun frock on the other, you'd forget the grand lady, and think only of Rosaleen. Not but what she's the grand lady, too, for she's as proud as her grandfather, and knows that she belongs to a line of kings. But, man, you should see her. She's just a picture. You never saw anyone carry herself just like she does. She makes the common gown she wears look like a countess's ball dress. Then she's alive, every inch of her. Her great black eyes flash fire ; her hair, as black as a raven's wing, yet shot with red and gold, shines like sunlight. Then her complexion—ah, Mr. Kildare, but you must see Rosaleen ! Talk about the tint of a rose ; I thought when I saw her last summer that she just put the rose to shame."

Denis burst out laughing. "You are a poet, Mr. Mulligan," he said.

"Ah, but Rosaleen always sets me off. The spirit of Ireland, that's what I call her, sir. But you're not likely to know her. You are English, and a Protestant, while she's Irish, and hates everything English. Besides, her grandfather guards her as a miser guards his gold. And I expect he'd not speak to you either. He was great friends with your grandfather ; but then, they were at one in sympathy and religion."

"But I'm a Kildare, Mr. Mulligan."

"Ah, but you've been brought up in England, and you've

forsaken the old faith. No, old Pat would set the dogs on you if you appeared at Rathsheen."

"And he's poor, you say?"

"Yes, poor; at least he's supposed to be. All the same, I believe he's a long stocking somewhere. He supports Irish institutions, sir, and always seems to have money when he wants it. Still, he must be poor. He lives at a broken-down old house, and has only a few acres of land. Yes, he must be poor."

"One can't help being interested in him after your description," said Denis.

"Yes, I'd like you to know old Pat and Rosaleen; but it wouldn't do. I believe you'd want to be friends with them, and, if you did, every one of the Protestants in the district would give you the go-by. Ah, there is Patty to tell us that lunch is ready. I expect you'll want to be making changes in the house, Mr. Kildare. It badly wants doing up, while as for these lawns and gardens, I don't believe Michael Kildare spent a five-pound note on them during the last five years."

They found their way back to the house, and Mr. Mulligan, who seemed to be well acquainted with the geography of the building, led the way into the dining-room."

"It's a fine apartment, Mr. Kildare," said Mr. Mulligan, noting that Denis was evidently taking note of its proportions.

"Yes, it must have been very handsome at one time," said the young man.

"It was called the banqueting-hall in the old days, sir, and I suppose there were great doings here in the time of the old Catholic gentry. Even in your grandfather's days people used to come here from all parts of Ireland. The Kildares of Kildare came here, and the Shannons, and the O'Hagans, and the O'Briens; but Ireland has changed in the last sixty years. The Protestants own nearly all the land in Ireland. The Catholics, as you know, have been robbed ever since the times of Elizabeth."

Denis noticed the fine old panelling with which the walls were covered, as well as the noble proportions of the room. The ceiling, too, which was much battered and very dirty, was evidently decorated by an artist. The oak floor was still handsome.

"A few thousand pounds well spent, and the house could be made the show-place for the South of Ireland," remarked Mr. Breen.

The lunch which Patricia had provided, although coarse, was plentiful and wholesome, and the woman was quite excited as she brought it in.

"Sure and it was lucky I told Shamus to bring plenty of mutton to-day," she remarked, as she placed the steaming dishes on the table.

"You might have expected me," laughed Denis.

The woman gave a knowing glance at the lawyer, which Denis was not slow to interpret, although he said nothing.

The whisky which the lawyers had consumed did not affect their appetites, while Denis, who was a good trencherman, did justice to Patricia's viands.

"What a magnificent view there is from this window," remarked Denis presently.

"Yes, the old Kildares knew what they were doing when they chose this site," remarked the lawyer. "It's a grand place, sir, and that you'll say when you go over the house. But it badly wants doing up—badly, sir."

"Of course you were my uncle's solicitors?"

"Yes, sir; we were not only his lawyers, but we often acted the part of agent as well. It would have been better both for him and the estate if he had left everything in our hands; but he was a stubborn man. When he once got the bit between his teeth there was neither holding him nor guiding him. Did you see the new church as you came up, sir?"

"Yes, I saw it."

"A fine, handsome church, sir. It was Father Meharry's idea, and it cost a mint of money—just a mint of it! I reckon that most of it came from Michael Kildare's pocket, although, of course, the people gave thousands."

"From what I saw of the village, I should judge there wasn't a thousand pounds in the place," said Denis.

"Oh, Father Meharry has a way with him; there can be no doubt about that. What with weddings, and christenings, and funerals, and thanksgiving offerings, and Christmas collections, and masses, he gets a good deal out of the people. I suppose they had hard work in getting the last

£500, but Father Meharry preached a Christmas sermon, and got it."

"I don't understand."

"Oh, he preached about the Christmas collection. He said, 'If I find anyone who doesn't pay, I'll have him exposed. If I find anyone who does not give more than so-and-so, I'll have his name sounded all over the parish !' You see, he knows the income of every member of his flock, and what the stock of every farmer is worth. Anyhow, he got his money. Mind, Mr. Kildare, I'm telling you this in confidence, and I don't want it to go any further. You see, it would go hard for me if I had the priests against me."

"Are you a Roman Catholic then ?"

"Oh, yes, I'm a Roman Catholic, but I'm speaking freely to you because I know you'll not let on. Still, although the priest bled the people well, the church would never have been built but for Michael Kildare."

Denis looked around the room. He saw that the door was shut, and that he was alone save for the two lawyers.

"Oh, you needn't fear that anyone is listening," said Mr. Breen. "Mulligan has a way with him too, and Patty would not dare to listen when he's in the house. Still, you must be careful of your servants, Mr. Kildare ; it's a wonderful way things have of finding their way to the priest's ears."

This speech was a revelation to Denis ; it opened his eyes to many things that happened afterwards.

"I suppose," he said hesitatingly, "that you know pretty well how I stand financially ?"

"Pretty well," replied the lawyer.

"Mr. MacNiven will be here in a few days, and will go into the whole matter with you ; but I should like to know roughly how I stand."

"Very little ready money," replied the lawyer ; "very little indeed. Where it's all gone to I don't know, although I can guess. As I told you, Michael Kildare was very anxious to save his soul, and Father Meharry was his chief friend. Still, things might be worse, and there's a lot of rent overdue. As luck would have it, too, the last few months have been fairly good. Still, it'll take a couple of years before you'll be comfortable, and you'll have to be careful too."

"Was my uncle popular among his tenants ?"

Both the lawyers laughed aloud. "Your uncle popular ! Why, he was a landlord, and who ever knew of a popular landlord ?"

"But he was a Roman Catholic."

"That doesn't matter. Catholic or Protestant, landlords are all hated in Ireland. Besides, although Michael Kildare was not against Home Rule, he never took any public part in advocating it. Even if he had, I doubt if it would have made any difference. The Irish tenant looks upon the landlord as his natural enemy, Catholic or Protestant, and hates him as a natural consequence. You must not expect to be popular among the people, Mr. Kildare ; you may as well know that first as last."

Denis was silent, but in his heart he registered a vow that he would make the people love him, that he would so live and act for the welfare of the people that they should look on him as their natural friend.

"I shall be very glad to go into everything with you, Mr. Kildare, pending the visit of Mr. MacNiven," said Mr. Mulligan presently.

The lawyer was very anxious to make himself agreeable to the new owner of Kildare. He had but little to do with the estate in Michael Kildare's time, and hoped to be regarded not only as lawyer, but as agent as well. He reflected that Denis would be absolutely ignorant as to how to proceed, and would be led to depend on him for everything. At first he was angry that the young man should have come at such an inauspicious time, but, seeing he had come, he determined to turn everything to the best account. He was a clever man in his way, and he saw the kind of man Denis was. That was why he had spoken so freely concerning the building of the church and the influence of Father Meharry. Both he and Mr. Breen were Roman Catholics by birth and education, but neither were regarded as good Catholics among a people which is, perhaps, more obedient to the priest than any other people in the world. He therefore thought it good policy to appear to have no very strong religious tendencies.

"Of course there is a Protestant church here somewhere," said Denis presently.

"Oh, yes, but it's at the other end of the village. You couldn't see it as you came up."

"Do many people attend it?"

"Not many. Just a handful. Of course the Tyrones and the Kellys go there, and just a few other Protestants, but the bulk of the people are Catholics."

Again Denis's heart beat wildly. It was Thursday, and he would have only a few days to wait. He would see Lenore, he would be in the same church. Perhaps the news of his coming would reach Sir Charles Tyrone, who would go out of his way to meet him.

"You'll go to the Protestant church, I'm thinking," said the lawyer.

"Certainly," replied Denis; "why not?"

The lawyer was silent for a few seconds. "It'll be a terrible blow," he said presently. "No Kildare was ever seen in the Protestant church here, and—and—well, I don't know."

"What do you mean?"

"It isn't as though the family had always been Protestants. It would have been taken as a matter of course then, and no one would have ever said a word. But for a Kildare to go to a Protestant church—I don't know what they'll do. I wouldn't go the first Sunday, if I were you. I don't think it would be best."

A flush of anger rose to the young man's cheek. He resented the lawyer's words.

"You mustn't think that the Catholics of Ireland are bigoted or persecuting," said the lawyer, "they are not. If you'd come in the ordinary way, you wouldn't have suffered for being a Protestant. Of course the Catholics might have kept aloof from you, but, on the whole, you wouldn't have been the worse off. For that matter, the few prosperous people in the country are nearly all Protestants. It's a sore point with the Catholics, but it's a fact. No, that isn't it. It's the fact that you are a Kildare, and a Kildare of Kildare Castle. That's what'll stick. Never was such a thing known. As long as this old place has been standing here the Kildares have always been Catholics and supported the Catholic Church. Therefore, to see you go to the Protestant church, I tell you I don't like to think of it. You'd better make friends with Father Meharry as soon as may be."

"Of course I shall be friends with Father Meharry,"

cried the young man impatiently ; "I hope to be friends with everyone."

"Ah, but I don't mean in that way. I mean that you must make matters straight with him. I don't doubt but he'll be here to see you before the day is out."

"Why, in heaven's name ?"

"Because you are a Kildare of Kildare Castle."

"But I'm a Protestant."

The lawyer was silent. "It'll make things awkward, Mr. Kildare. If the priest turns against you, you'll have a rough time."

"How a rough time ?"

"I'd better not tell you. Let's hope everything will go right. If you subscribe largely to the church funds, it may be that things can be patched up."

"What ! hush money ?" cried Denis indignantly.

"Don't put it that way," said the lawyer. "Let's call it judicious charity. You see, Ireland's like no other country, Mr. Kildare. Nine out of every ten people in the parish would no more think of disobeying the priest than of disobeying the Blessed Virgin herself if she were to appear to them in a vision."

"Surely you don't mean that ?"

"I do, indeed, on all matters of religion. As for other things—well, it's just the same in the long run. From time to time there have been those who have had temerity enough to oppose them ; but the opposition always breaks down. No, you will be in a bad way if you have the priests against you. You see, Father Meharry and his curate rule the parish. Well, Breen, I think we may as well be going. Mr. Kildare will want to be alone, so that he may inspect his property."

They had finished lunch by this time, and Denis had in no way encouraged the lawyer in the direction of whisky. Mr. Mulligan was much chagrined at this. He saw that his visits at the Castle would be bereft of much of the pleasure he had anticipated.

"Don't go for a few minutes, anyhow," said Denis. "I should like to take advantage of your offer to discuss the affairs of the estate, pending Mr. MacNiven's visit."

An hour later the young man was alone, and, in spite of everything, a feeling of disappointment crept over him.

Earlier in the day he had been buoyed up by the romance of his new surroundings, but the information which the lawyer had given him, and the feeling that he was in the great house without a friend, caused a feeling of depression. Still, no sooner had the lawyer gone than he started on a tour of inspection, and went from room to room with mingled feelings. The sense of exhilaration that all he saw was his own, and that he was in the ancient seat of the Kildares, from which family he sprung, was largely nullified by the silence which everywhere prevailed. Indeed, the silence was almost awesome. The songs of the birds did not reach him, and the only noise he heard was the echo of his own footsteps. The great rooms through which he passed, too, seemed gaunt and oppressive. They were nearly all of them sparsely furnished, and badly needed repair. They felt cold and damp, too, as if they had not been occupied for years. He wondered which bedroom Michael Kildare had slept in, and determined that, whichever it was, he would choose another.

"I must brighten up the place a bit," he reflected again and again. "And I'll get some chaps over from England, too, and liven things up a bit. I shall die of the doldrums if I don't. I don't wonder at the absentee landlords, of whom the people complain, if all the houses are as dismal as this."

Still, he was interested, and he did not seriously think of living in England. The fascination of the house, even in spite of its gloom, was strong; moreover, when at length he found himself in the library, his spirits were lightened. Like the other rooms, it had a feeling of coldness and dampness; nevertheless, it suggested comfort. There were several large leather-covered arm-chairs in the room, while the walls were lined with books. They had no appearance of being used for years, but they seemed to give him a welcome, especially some of the volumes which were old friends.

He unfastened two of the windows, and the warm spring air swept in, and the song of the birds reached him again.

"That is better," he cried. "This is the room where I shall spend my time. It's homely, in spite of its tremendous size."

Again he went outside. He had seen the house, and now

he wanted to explore the grounds. He had not gone far before he heard an angry growl, and, turning, he saw a huge dog coming towards him. It seemed to be a cross between a Great Dane and a mastiff, and looked very savage. The beast came towards him with a snarl, and then, having come within a few feet of him, crouched as if for a spring. Denis had no weapon of any sort, and from the bared teeth of the dog he knew that he was in a dangerous mood. Still, the young man stood his ground, and had no thought of calling for help.

"Hulloa, old man," he said quietly, "you don't know who to take me for, eh?"

The dog blinked at him and his teeth remained bare. Denis took a step towards him.

"Come here, sir," he said.

The dog crept towards him, as if in doubt what to do. Denis went up close to him, and looked at him steadily.

"I don't know what your name is, but I'm going to call you Pat," he said. "Well, Pat, I'm your master, and you've got to obey me. Do you see?"

Whether there was something in the young man's voice that he recognised, or whether he had some sort of instinct that told him who the stranger was, I cannot say; certain it is that the angry look left his eyes, and his teeth were no longer bared. Still, he did not seem certain what to do, and a sound escaped him that was half a growl of anger and half a yelp of welcome.

"I'm your new master, Pat," said Denis, "and we are going to be friends. Give us your paw, old man."

The growl was completely lost in the yelp of welcome.

"That's good, old chap," said the young man, patting the dog's head. "Then we are going to be friends, eh?"

"Pat! Pat! come here, sir!" and a man ran up like one in fear. "Don't touch him, sir, for sure he's a dangerous baste, and 'll kill you."

"He's all right, you see," said Denis, as the dog licked his hand.

"Faith, an' I niver saw such a thing in my life," cried the man wonderingly, "for Pat's as savage as the devil with strangers; and beg yer honour's pardon, but are ye the new master what Patricia's been talkin' about, and praisin' to the skies?"

"That's just what I am; and you?"

"I'm Shamus Kinsella, yer honour, and it's your gardener I am, and proud I am to welcome you. Sure, and I see you are a Kildare now I look at ye, and Pat saw it too, or faith and by jabers he'd have eaten ye up intirely."

A few minutes later Denis had wandered further away from his house, while Pat kept close by his side, constantly licking Denis's hand as he went. Evidently the beast had recognised him as his new master, and had given him his affection. The fact lightened Denis's spirits wonderfully. It seemed to him a good omen that he had won the dog's affection so completely. Shamus Kinsella had told him that he had grieved very much at Michael Kildare's death, and was savage with strangers, while now he seemed happy and docile.

"I hit upon the right name, too," reflected the young man; "there is surely something prophetic about it all."

Again he stood upon a spot from which he could see Sir Charles Tyrone's house, and again his heart beat wildly. He no longer felt lonely. The girl who had haunted his dreams for years, and who had actually crossed the pathway of his life three times, was near him. Her presence seemed in the air he breathed, and in a few days he would meet her. He was as sure of it as if it were already an accomplished fact.

"Do you know her, old man?" he said to the dog.

Pat gave a yelp of joy, and, jumping up, placed his paws on his master's chest.

"Does that mean yes, old man? And will she be kind to me, eh? Tell me that."

The dog tried to lick his master's face, and then scampered around him as if unable to contain his joy.

"It must be she; it must be!" cried Denis. "There cannot be another Lenore, and I shall see her soon."

His heart was as light as a feather again, and the romance of his surroundings caused everything to be tinted with hope and gladness.

"If you plase, yer honour——"

"Yes, Patricia."

"It's Father Meharry who's inside and wants to speake with yer honour."

"All right, Patricia. By the way, I shall sit in the library after dinner to-night, so will you please put a good fire there?"

"Yis, yer honour, but the praste is in the room where you saw Mr. Mulligan and the other gintlemen this morning."

A minute later Denis was shaking hands with Father Meharry.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF ROSALEEN

"I THOUGHT it might be you, when I was coming down from the Castle this morning," said the priest, "but I couldn't be sure, as Mr. Mulligan told me you weren't coming for a few days."

"Oh! you've been here this morning?" queried Denis.

"Yes; I heard that Mulligan and Breen were coming, and I thought I'd like to speak to them. As soon as I knew you'd come, I felt I must come up and bid you welcome."

"It's very kind of you," replied Denis cordially.

"It'll be very different from London, but it's a beautiful place you've inherited. There's not a finer spot in all the South of Ireland."

"I thought Sir Charles Tyrone's house looked very fine when I saw it just now."

"Perhaps you know Sir Charles?" said the priest.

"I never heard the name until two or three hours ago," replied Denis; "but Mr. Mulligan happened to tell me when we were looking at the house. Of course you will know Sir Charles?"

"I've met him on committees, and such like," replied the priest, "but although I've been in the parish for more than thirty years, I've never been in the house."

Denis made no reply.

"You'll, of course, be knowing that nearly all the landlords and aristocracy in Ireland are Protestants?" went on the priest. "Only a few of the old landed gentry, like the Kildares, are of the old faith."

He looked at the young man warily as he spoke. He spoke as one not sure of his ground, and he evidently wanted to be. Still Denis did not reply. He felt that the situation was delicate, and that the least said the soonest mended.

"And I hope the Kildares always will be of the old faith," went on Father Meharry. "Do you know it was I who christened you, and made you a Catholic?"

"That's very interesting," replied Denis, "but I did not know Catholics were made that way."

"You were received into the Church by baptism," replied the priest, "and therefore you are a Catholic. You are a child of the Church, Mr. Kildare, and nothing can undo the fact."

"I don't think we'd better discuss that question," replied Denis quietly; "I have been told something of the history of that christening, and what my mother thought about it. However, that need not affect anything now. I hope you'll find me a good neighbour, Father Meharry, and that the tenants will find me a good landlord. I've come here with all sorts of good resolutions."

"But you don't mean to tell me," cried Father Meharry, and his voice was almost hoarse, "that you've turned your back on the old faith? Ye can't, man; ye are a Kildare, and no Kildare was ever anything else than a Catholic!"

"I never saw a Catholic church until I was nearly twenty; indeed, I am not sure I ever saw a Roman Catholic until that time. They were not known in the part of the country where I was reared."

"And you mean that you were brought up a Protestant?" and the priest's eyes flashed fire. Evidently the matter was of supreme importance to him.

"I was brought up in my mother's faith," replied Denis. "She took me away from here for that purpose. Of course you've heard about it?"

"Ah, but you are a Catholic for all that. Nothing can undo the fact that the sacrament of baptism was administered just after you were born, and therefore you belong to the Church. You may have wandered away, but you'll come back—you'll come back, Mr. Kildare."

"We'll not discuss it anyhow," said Denis. "It shall not be my fault if we are not good friends."

"Your late uncle was the truest friend the Church had in the parish," said the priest. "Of course you'll keep up the interest of the family in the work we do?"

"As soon as I know exactly how I stand, I'll go into

everything carefully," replied the young man, "and, as far as I can afford it, every deserving charity that you bring before me shall be considered very sympathetically."

The priest seemed undecided what to do. He was disappointed and angry at the young man's words, and felt impelled to try and maintain his old ascendancy. On the other hand, he was, in spite of his being regarded as something of a firebrand, a kind-hearted and friendly man by nature. His genial Irish nature gained the victory.

"It's a great blow, Mr. Kildare," he said—"a great blow. There never was a Kildare of Kildare Castle but who stood by the old faith, and it breaks my heart to think of a change. Still, I'll pray for ye, and I'll never give up hope but that you'll be true to the faith of your fathers."

"That's all right, Father Meharry; now tell me something about the parish and about the people."

"I expect Mulligan will have told you everything," said the priest. "He's a regular encyclopædia of general information. I believe he knows the history of every important family in Munster and Connaught."

"A most valuable man," laughed Denis. "He struck me as having pretty extensive knowledge concerning things generally. Nevertheless, he looked at everything through the eyes of a lawyer, while, naturally—well, you are a clergyman."

"Yes, I am a priest, and I know every member of my flock; but nearly all the Catholics are poor, Mr. Kildare, and their poverty at times is very distressing."

"The houses in the village looked very miserable, certainly," assented Denis.

"Many of them belong to you," replied Father Meharry.

"When I settle down a bit I'll certainly inquire into the condition of those that belong to me," replied Denis, "and, so far as it is in my power, they shall be made habitable."

"Ah, but you must remember that the Irish peasant is not like your English working people," replied the priest quickly. "Whatever you do, you'll never get our people up to your English standards in matters of thrift and cleanliness. They are a good people, and they are a happy people, but they are like the birds of the air, they take no thought for the morrow."

A dozen questions rose to the young man's lips, but he did not think it well to ask them. He reflected that he did not yet know enough about the district to ask wise questions about the conditions of Irish life.

"Mr. Mulligan was telling me to-day about a man who lives some distance away, called Patrick O'Hara," he said presently; "do you know him?"

"Who doesn't?" replied the priest.

"I should judge him to be a character from Mr. Mulligan's description," ventured Denis.

"A dangerous character," replied the priest quickly. There was anger in his voice.

"Indeed, I judged that he has a great deal of influence."

"Influence! he has far too much influence; but it is a bad influence, Mr. Kildare—a bad influence."

"If I remember aright, Mr. Mulligan spoke of him as one of your people."

"My people! What do you mean by that?"

"That he is of your faith."

"The O'Haras have always been Catholics; for that matter more than one of them have died for it. All the same, old Pat is not a good Catholic."

"No, in what way?"

"A good Catholic always stands by the Church."

"And doesn't Mr. O'Hara?"

"He's a leader of a dangerous movement, Mr. Kildare: a movement which, if it were successful, would do untold harm. I know he calls himself a Catholic; but there—I don't think you'd understand if I told you. Besides, it's not likely you'll meet him."

"No, why?"

"I'm told you're English in your sympathies, and are deadly opposed to an Irish Parliament."

"Who in the world told you that?"

Father Mehabry seemed confused for a moment, then he said:

"I had it from a young fellow who knew you at Oxford."

"Evidently he has been making inquiries about me," thought Denis. "Of course, too, he knew that I was a Protestant."

"And Mr. O'Hara is doubtless a strong Home Ruler?"

"He is more than that; he's a Fenian—he hates England, he wants entire separation from England."

"I suppose he was a follower of Parnell then?"

"Pat O'Hara follows no man. He's a dictator, he's a--but there, it doesn't matter. You were reared in England, and have all the prejudices of your class, and all the Protestants hate him. He's a bigger aristocrat in his way than any of them, but not one of them would speak to him."

"From what you say, he's avoided not only by Protestants, but by your own people. How, then, can he be a man of such influence?"

"It's hard for you to understand. Of course he's a Catholic, as all his people have been, but he treats the priests as the old English aristocracy treated them. Socially, he treats the main bulk of them as inferiors. He does what a lot of Irish politicians do in England, but never dare to do at home. He's a believer in Daniel O'Connell's pet phrase. He declares he'll take his religion from Rome, but his politics from home. He says that neither Church nor priest should have anything to do with the Government of the country, and should leave the people to act as they please in matters political."

"That's what clergymen of all sorts have to do in England," replied Denis.

"It's impossible in Ireland," cried the priest. "Why, if the priests left the people alone, they'd become the tools of political agitators. We'd have Socialism ruling Ireland in ten years. Why, in heaven's name, who should know what's good for the people of Ireland so well as the priests? Who has stood by them like the priests? Who has fed the hungry and clothed the naked in Ireland like the priests, Mr. Kildare? I tell you, it would never do. All old Pat O'Hara's talk about making the Irish people responsible and independent is poison, rank poison. We'd have a nation of atheists in a few years."

"Ah, I see, O'Hara does not believe in the Church taking part in the people's politics?"

"He fights England on the one hand, and he fights the only friends of Ireland on the other. He hates the Kellys and the Tyroneys, and the Cantyres and the Clares, because they are true to the instincts of their class, and lick the

boots of England ; but, Catholic as he is, he's no friend to the Church, Mr. Kildare. All the same, he loves Ireland, and would die for it. That's one of the reasons he has so much power with the people. 'Ireland for the Irish,' is his cry, and in addition to that he is for ever shouting Gladstone's phrase, and using it for Ireland. 'Government of the people, for the people, and by the people' indeed ! Why, you saw the people as you rode through the village. Would you like to be governed by them ? "

" But I thought you believed in self-government for Ireland," said Denis ; and he added, with a twinkle in his eye, " Are you not somewhat of a rebel yourself ? "

" Ah, but Pat O'Hara is different," cried Father Meharry. " He's a fanatical idealist ; he fights the Church while calling himself a Catholic ; and, the worst of it, he's brought up Rosaleen in the same way. And the people would die for her."

" Is she a politician too ? "

" In a way she is. Eh, man, but you never saw the like of Rosaleen. Only a few months ago there was a rowdy meeting at Collysheen, and the people got out of hand. I could do nothing with them, and even old Pat began to be anxious, for some of them had been after taking too much bad whisky. I tell you, I feared bloodshed. But when things were at their worst, Rosaleen got on to the platform, and in three minutes they were like lambs."

" Indeed, and what did she do ? "

" Faith, and I don't know what she did, or what she said. She was just like a picture as she stood there, with her black eyes flashing, her hair shining, and her face lit up with smiles. Her voice was like music too. She was like David with the harp, who charmed the evil spirit out of King Saul."

" Then she cannot be a bad girl ? "

" A bad girl ! Who, in heaven's name, said she was ? She's a queen among women is Rosaleen, and when Ireland is a free country there'll be no one as fit to be a queen as she. But don't you see, Mr. Kildare, she's full of her father's notions, and she'll have to be put down."

" Put down ? I don't understand."

" I mean that Pat O'Hara must never get a party strong

enough to send members to Parliament—that is, they must never get there in sufficient numbers to be dangerous. But I must be going now, Mr. Kildare. Ah, but it's a sad blow, a sad blow; still, you'll be a friend to the Church for your name's sake, won't you?"

"I hope to be friends with everyone," replied Denis cautiously.

"And don't press your English notions too strongly, Mr. Kildare. Ye'll have trouble if ye do."

There was something menacing, not so much in his words as in the tone of his voice, which grated upon Denis's ears.

"Trouble, in what way?" he asked.

"Ye must remember that Ireland is a Catholic country, and must be governed by Catholic ideals," replied the priest.

"It is true the Protestants have robbed the Catholics of their lands, and that they are rich while we are poor; but the people of Ireland are Catholic for all that."

"It's said in England that the Irish priesthood is the richest in the world," said Denis.

"A lot of lies are told in England," replied the priest, almost angrily. "Of this you may be sure, the Irish Catholics will never lick the dirty boots of English politicians, whatever the Protestants do."

"I daresay I'll be seeing you often," said Denis, as the priest rose to go. "I'm going to be a regular busybody, Father Meharry, and I'm just going to try and make my estate the happiest and most enlightened in the country."

The priest opened his mouth as if to speak, but evidently he thought better of it, for he closed his lips with a snap.

"I shall have trouble with him," he reflected as he went towards the village. "Never a drop of whisky did he offer me, and he looks the kind of fellow who'll have all sorts of silly notions. Still, he can't do much harm—no, he can't do much harm."

As for Denis, he roamed over the house again, and wandered from room to room like a man fascinated.

"I can't realise that I lived here when I was a baby," he said to himself again and again. "I can't realise that I'm master of it all."

He called Patricia to him, and selected his bedroom; then, after dinner, he retired early. He had slept but little the night before, and the day had been so full of excitement

that he was utterly weary. The old feeling of depression had come back too. The two candles which Patricia had given him threw a dim, ghostly light around the great, gaunt, bare room, while the silence was as the silence of death. He went to the window and looked across the grounds. A four-days'-old moon shone upon the scene, and the trees cast weird shadows on the ground. No other light was to be seen ; not a sound was to be heard. The house was as silent as a tomb, and it seemed as though it were situated in an uninhabited land. He looked in the direction of Sir Charles Tyrone's house, but could see nothing. Great trees and the shoulder of a hill hid it from him.

"But she's there," he murmured, "she's there, and I must see her soon." He spoke bravely, but she seemed less near to him now than when he was in England.

"Perhaps she doesn't live there at all," he reflected. "I have been a fool for imagining that because Sir Charles Tyrone's daughter is called Lenore she is my Lenore. She may be in England now, in spite of my silly fancies."

He was not long in falling asleep, but he was disturbed by dreams. Michael Kildare, Pat O'Hara, Lenore Tyrone, and Rosaleen were strangely mixed up together. It seemed to him that a part of his dream of the previous night was repeated ; he thought, too, they represented two spirits, each of which was fighting for his soul, while Michael Kildare looked on grimly, as though he had a sardonic interest as to who should win the battle. Then Pat O'Hara and Rosaleen appeared to him, and asked him to espouse the cause they had at heart ; and as he looked at them it seemed to him that the old man was the spirit of Old Ireland—wild, savage, yet possessing a strange fascination ; while Rosaleen, with her full red lips, her black eyes and shining hair, was the spirit of Modern Ireland. "We need you ; it is your duty to join us," they cried. "Come and fight our battles." But before he could take a step towards them he saw the form of Lenore, beautiful as an angel, but as cold as marble. "You dare not, you dare not !" she cried, and then a great darkness surrounded him.

When he awoke the birds were singing blithely, while the sunlight streamed into his room. Denis jumped out of

bed and ran to the window. The countryside lay smiling in the morning sunlight, the air was soft and refreshing. He became light-hearted and gay as if by magic. The feeling that Lenore was near him became strong again.

He plunged into a bath, and laughed as the cold water stung him. A few minutes later he was out on the lawn.

"At least I can afford to have a few men here to tidy up the garden," he said. "I must speak to Shamus Kinsella right away."

But Shamus was not to be found—neither in the garden nor in the badly dilapidated conservatories could he be seen. "It's a quarter-past seven too," said Denis, looking at his watch. "Perhaps he'll be gone to his breakfast."

He went to the stables and gave a cry of delight. A young horse stood in a loose box. He had loved horses all his life. He entered the box, and patted the handsome creature, who whinnied its welcome. A moment later Pat, the huge dog, came rushing on him with a joyful yelp. Denis laughed again as he patted him.

"A horse and a dog! I'm not so badly off after all. Evidently Mulligan was mistaken when he said that my Uncle Michael had cleared all such things off the place."

He started to walk down the road towards the village, and a few minutes later stood in the squalid street. It was not a pleasant sight. Slatternly, dirty women stood gossiping; ragged, unwashed children played in the gutters. Many of the huts presented dire poverty. Still the peasants did not seem unhappy.

But they gave him no greeting. He knew by the look on their faces that they recognised him, but they did not seem to regard him favourably. Presently he saw Shamus coming out of one of the many little public-houses in the village. Shamus touched his hat and looked sheepish.

"Not at work, Shamus?" said Denis. "You told me that you were always at work by six."

"Faith, and I don't feel well at all to-day, yer honour," said Shamus, "and I thought I'd like to drink yer honour's health, and attend to my own at the same time."

"Shamus," said Denis, "this is bad for you. I'll look over it this time, but it must not happen again."

"Sure, and it shan't, yer honour, only——"

"Never mind that," interrupted Denis; "but tell

me, do you know of a strong, steady lad who wants a job?"

"That I do, yer honour."

"Then hire him, and take him up with you and mow the lawns. I want the place tidied up."

"That I will, yer honour."

"But you must get a fellow who can work. I want no idlers around. I'll see you in an hour or so, and tell you what I want."

Shamus looked at him darkly, while a group of people gathered around and asked him what his new master had said.

Denis came to the church. It was a large, florid-looking building, while the steeple rose high in the heavens. Acting on impulse he made his way in at the open door. Some villagers were coming out, and they turned to watch him. The young man took off his hat, and then stepped quietly into the church. The windows were highly coloured by religious pictures, and the altar looked very gaudy. Evidently a great deal of money had been spent, but the place was not beautiful ; it was florid beyond words.

Many eyes were turned towards him, for some villagers had followed him to the church, and some of those who were within had noticed him. Denis felt sure they knew who he was. He made his way out again. Some of the peasants curtsied to him, and pronounced blessings upon him ; but when he was out of hearing there was much nodding and whispering.

"He never said a prayer."

"Or knelt before the figure of the Blessed Lord."

"Or crossed himself."

"Or genuflected before the altar where the blessed sacrament is kept."

"And he a Kildare too. It's true what Father Meharry and Father O'Sheen said. It's no longer a Catholic we shall have at the castle."

Denis, ignorant of all that was being said, wandered further down the long street which comprised the village. Presently he saw coming towards him, riding on a shaggy pony, a tall, striking-looking old man. Both his hair and beard were long and white, but he rode the pony like a young man. His eyes too had the flash of youth. He

looked at Denis keenly, as if in doubt as to who he might be, while the young man returned the questioning glance.

"It might be the famous Pat O'Hara," thought the young man as he passed along. As for the old man, he rode a few yards further, and then leapt from the pony's back as lightly as a boy.

"Jim," he said, calling a man to his side, "who is that?"

"Sure, and it's the new Squire Kildare."

The old man turned, and gave another look at Denis's retreating figure.

"And when did he come?"

"It was yesterday about noon, Mr. O'Hara." He looked down the road, and came nearer the old man. "Sure, and Father Mehaberry doesn't like him," he whispered, "he's a Protestant."

"How do you know?"

"He went into the chapel just now."

The old man laughed. "That does not prove him to be a Protestant, surely?" he said.

"Faith, and it does," replied Tim, "for he never said a prayer, and never bowed to the altar. He just looked around as though it were a worldly place, like a Presbyterian church. And he a Kildare too, a Kildare of the Castle."

"He came yesterday, did he?" said the old man reflectively; "then you'll all be after knowing everything about him?"

"Mr. Mulligan and Mr. Breen were up at the Castle to lunch with him, and they called at the Gaelic Arms to have a drink after they left him," replied Tom knowingly. "Then Jim Malone and his wife both came down here after he went to bed, which was just before ten o'clock, and Jim Malone is uncle to Patty, who's been cook at the Castle for years. (Roast mutton was what they had for their meal yesterday, yer honour.) Well, Jim Malone and his wife had a talk with sivil people. Then Shamus Kinsella, who works in the garden, spent the evenin' with a lot of us at Jimmy Flanagan's place, and Jimmy stood him sivil drinks, and as Shamus is very free speech after he's got a drop of drink inside him—well, as you may say, we'll be after knowin' all there is to know."

"Ah, you think that, do you?" said the old man with a laugh.

"We know that he's young, about four-and-twenty, that he's a Protestant, that he nivir gits drunk, that Patty worships him, that he manes to spend a lot of money on the Castle, and give a lot away. Besides, he's goin' to lower the rents all round, and give a great feast to the tenants in about a fortnight. Those are a few things we know," said Tim, "but that's not all by a long way."

"And did he tell Jim Malone all these things?"

"I don't rightly know that he did," replied Tim; "all the same, they were able to tell me. And Father Meharry was at the Castle too, and nivir a drink did he get. That I know is true, for Patty ses that nivir a drop of whisky left the bottle after Mr. Mulligan left. It spakes badly for him, Mr. O'Hara; and, besides, he's talked to Shamus Kinsella this morning about havin' a drap o' the crater this mornin'. And it's sure I am that Father Meharry don't like him."

"Don't talk foolishly, Tim," said the old man. "How can you know that Father Meharry doesn't like him?"

"How can he like him when he kept the whisky cupboard locked? Besides, he's a Protestant; a Protestant, Mr. O'Hara; and he a Kildare. Faith, and the curse of God will rest upon his soul if he goes to the Protestant church, and listens to the Protestant rector. For that matter, how can the blessin' of God rest upon a Kildare who has left the old faith?"

The old man made no further remark, but rode along the village street. Everywhere he was met with smiles, and courtesies, and signs of affection. Evidently he was much beloved.

"I suppose he'll link himself up with these English upstarts," he muttered presently; and then he looked long and sadly down the village street.

Denis went back to the house in high spirits and with a ravenous appetite. If he had not won Patricia's heart already, his cheery laugh and the way he attacked the ham and eggs which she had provided would have done so; in fact, Patricia already worshipped her young master.

"Protestant though he may be," she said to Mrs. Malone, "he's a true Kildare, every inch of him, and may the blessin' of the Virgin and all the saints be upon him."

"Sure, and it's a joy to live since he's come," said Mrs.

Malone, "but I expect he'll be after sendin' us packin'. He'll want smarter and grander servants than we are."

"You are a liar, Mary Malone, although you are my own aunt," said Patty warmly. "It's three males I've cooked for him, and he's done justice to ivery one of them, and has praised me up to the skies."

"It'll be his blarney," replied Mrs. Malone.

"Such a gintleman as he is would nivir be after decavin' me," replied Patty.

Denis spent the morning in roaming around the grounds, and after lunch saddled the horse he had seen in the stables and went for a ride. He had received a telegram from Mr. MacNiven during the morning, who had told him he was coming to Ireland the next day, and the young man, who was eager for a gallop, thought it best to make certain of it before the lawyer's arrival.

This time he did not go through the village, but in the opposite direction, and before long was several miles from the Castle. The day was gloriously fine, and the air, though warm, was exhilarating. During his ride he passed through several squalid hamlets and villages. If possible, they were worse than his own. It is true that here and there were new cottages with strips of ground attached, but the main bulk of the people lived in cabins that looked wretched beyond description. He was off the beaten track of the tourist, and saw things as they really were.

"If this is Ireland in its prosperity, what must it have been in its poverty?" he reflected.

Nothing happened during his ride until he had turned his face homeward. As he was passing through one of the villages he saw a man who was evidently the worse for liquor. By his side was a girl of perhaps twenty. The man belonged to the peasant class, but the girl was different. The man was gesticulating wildly as Denis came up, and almost unconsciously he checked his horse.

"No, it's no use, Mike; you must go home," said the girl.

"Sure, an' I'll be goin' home soon."

"You must go at once—this very minute."

"But I have to wait for Dick Flaherty. I promised him I would, and ye wouldn't have me break my wurrd. I'll not drink a drap more—faith, an' I won't. For all that, not a drap hev passed my lips this blessed day."

" You are not going to wait for Dick Flaherty, and as I want to see Biddy you must go back with me. You wouldn't refuse a lady."

" Refuse ye, and me a gintleman!—there, I'll go wid ye at once."

Denis caught a glimpse of the girl's face, and his heart gave a leap. Black eyes, red lips, a perfect face—never before had he seen anyone like her. She was dressed in homespun garments, but she looked like a queen. Her every movement was instinct with healthy vitality.

For a moment the eyes of the young man and the girl met. A flush mounted her face, as though she felt angry at being seen trying to persuade a drunken man to go to his home. Of course neither said a word. Denis watched the couple till a corner in the road hid them from view, then he rode back to the Castle, smiling.

## CHAPTER XII

### DENIS MEETS LENORE

IT was past six o'clock when he reached the house, where Patricia met him.

"Sure, and Sir Charles Tyrone has called while yer honour has been away."

"Sir Charles Tyrone?"

"Yes; and not only Sir Charles, but the Protestant rector."

"The Protestant rector? Oh, yes; I remember now. Did they come together?"

"Sure, and they did, yer honour. An' it's the first time I've ever seen either of them on the doorstep of this house. I've no right to be sayin' it, but Mr. Michael used to hate Mr. Holland like poison."

"Mr. Holland? Oh, that's the name of the rector?"

"Yis; and they came in Sir Charles's carriage."

"Did they leave any message?"

"They left these bits of cards, Master Denis, and Sir Charles said he hoped you would excuse him for comin' so soon."

"And that was all?"

"No, it wasn't," said Patty triumphantly. "Sir Charles asked whether you'd be home to-night, and I told him you would, and he said he wasn't certain, but he might ride over and smoke a cigar with ye."

"Thank you, Patty," said Denis. "You'll be sure to get a fire lit in the library, won't you?"

"Faith, and there's been one burnin' there all the day; and if it's not dry it'll not be for want of shovellin' on coals."

Denis was much excited. He felt sure that Sir Charles was Lenore's father, and that his visit would prepare the way for that for which he had hoped so long."

"I shall see her soon," his heart cried. "I shall see her, speak to her, know her. Oh! but it was unfortunate that I should be out when he called."

And yet, in a way he could not understand, he was not sorry. Even then the face of the wonderful creature he had seen that afternoon flashed before his eyes; and during the time he was dressing for dinner he caught himself wondering whether she was the Rosaleen of whom he had heard, and whether he should ever see her again.

The library of Kildare Castle presented quite a pleasant appearance as Denis went into it after his lonely dinner. Outside the air was cold and keen, but Patricia had kept a good fire in the room all day, which had not only made it warm, but had destroyed the damp, musty feeling which had struck him on the previous day. She had also managed to find some large standard lamps, which threw a soft, mellow light around the room. Denis felt almost light-hearted as he pulled up a large leather-covered arm-chair before the fire and lit a cigar. For the first time he felt like loving his Irish home. He called in Pat, who, after doing his best to leave some marks of his affection on his master's evening clothes, lay contentedly before the fire, lifting his great brown eyes from time to time, as if to be certain that he was in no danger of being left alone. Evidently the animals had bestowed no small measure of love on the young man who had so unexpectedly come into his inheritance.

For some time the young man smoked contentedly. It is true there was a suggestion of loneliness in his heart, but he expected a visitor, and was somewhat excited at the thought of it.

"I'll get father and mother over here soon," he reflected, "and I'll give them a great time. If my funds will run to it, I'll buy a motor-car, and we'll have some runs around the country. My word! I can't realise it even yet. Fancy my being the owner of all this. Fancy, too—" and then his thoughts flew to the sail down the broad bosom of the Fal, where, for the first time, he saw the face that had haunted him ever since.

He took Professor Dicey's *Leap in the Dark* from the bookcase and tried to read. He felt as though he must know more of the struggles which had so long torn the land

of his birth in twain. Presently Pat leapt to his feet, and gave a savage growl. Evidently he had heard something which had not reached his young master's ears. A few seconds later Mrs. Malone came into the room.

"It's Sir Charles Tyrone, who has called to see yer honour."

"Tell him to come in, please."

His voice was almost hoarse with excitement. He felt that he should know in a few seconds whether all his wild fancies were justified.

"Be quiet, Pat, and lie down," he said as the dog growled again.

The next moment Denis knew that his heart had not deceived him. Before him stood the man he had seen at the base of the Martyrs' Memorial at Oxford.

"Sir Charles Tyrone," he said, stepping forward and taking his visitor's outstretched hand, "thank you for coming to see me."

"I felt I could not let the day pass without coming again to bid you welcome," said the older man.

Sir Charles Tyrone was a man about fifty years of age, tall, erect, and courteous in his bearing. He was unmistakably a gentleman; and, although there was a suggestion of the Irish accent in his speech, he suggested England rather than the Emerald Isle. He did not strike the young man as having an imposing personality; but the clear eye and well-shaped head spoke of a well-developed brain, and, from his quick, appreciative glance at the bookcases, Denis judged that his visitor was a book-lover.

"I am so sorry I was not at home when you called this afternoon," said the young man; "but, to tell you the truth, I found a good horse in the stables, and I yielded to my desire for a gallop."

"Fond of horses! That's good!" said Sir Charles heartily. "I did not know that Mr. Kildare kept any."

"I was told he didn't," replied Denis. "But I found one solitary horse, which struck me as rather good, and this creature here," and he nodded to Pat, who looked suspiciously at the new-comer.

"I suppose in the old days the Kildares were great sportsmen," replied Sir Charles. "Indeed, your father was spoken of as being one of the best shots, as well as one

of the most daring riders in the county. The other two brothers, I am told, never looked at either a gun or a horse. That is why I wondered at your finding a horse in the stables ? ”

“ Did you know my people ? ” asked the young man.

“ This is the first time I ever entered the house,” replied Sir Charles. “ I believe I spoke to your grandfather once or twice, but that is years ago. The truth is, we lived in different worlds. The Kildares have always been fanatically Roman Catholic and intensely Irish, while my people have always been Protestant and enthusiastically loyal. As I told you, I was never in the house before ; but to-day begins a new era, Mr. Kildare. I, as an Irishman, whose people have been on Irish soil for many generations, bid you the heartiest of welcomes. I hope we shall see a great deal of each other, and I trust that every happiness will be associated with your life here.”

His tones were hearty, although his words were rather stilted.

“ I see you have been reading Dicey’s *Leap in the Dark*,” he went on. “ A good book, Mr. Kildare ; it needs reading in these days now that the pestilence of Home Rule seems to be threatening us again.”

“ Do you know,” said Denis, “ that I’ve met you twice before ? ”

“ Met me twice before ! Where, pray ? ”

“ The first time was several years ago. It was in Cornwall. You were on a steamboat going from Malpas to Falmouth.”

“ I remember being there well. I took my daughter and sister for a holiday in England. You were on the boat, eh ? And you have remembered me all those years ? ”

“ The second time was in Oxford. It was at the base of the Martyrs’ Memorial.”

“ Another English holiday ! ” cried the baronet. “ We were staying with some friends about thirty miles from Oxford, and motored over. And you remembered me again ? You must have a good memory for faces ! ”

“ I remember what you said, too,” went on Denis. “ You told your companions that Ridley and Latimer died for truth and liberty, and that the faith for which they died had made England what she is.”

Sir Charles's face beamed with pleasure. He felt complimented that he should have made such an impression on the young man.

"And, you, Mr. Kildare; were you on holiday too?" he asked.

"My home was in Cornwall," replied Denis. "I was reared a very few miles from Truro. I had just finished school when I saw you. Your visit to Oxford was while I was at the 'Varsity."

"I must tell Lenore about this," cried the baronet. "She will be just as interested as I. Lenore is my daughter, Mr. Kildare. Do you remember seeing her as well?"

"Perfectly," replied Denis, who felt the blood mount to his face as he spoke. "She—she was only a child when I saw her on the Fal."

"Thirteen or fourteen," cried Sir Charles. "And she did enjoy her Cornish visit. Even now she raves about the beauties of the Cornish coast. You must tell her about it. And that reminds me, Mr. Kildare—and I'm sure you'll forgive the informality—but I'm Irish enough never to stand upon ceremony. My wife told me to be sure to ask you to dinner to-morrow night. She thought you might be lonely in this big house all by yourself. There will be no one there but my wife and myself, except Lenore and a friend she has staying with her."

"I would just love to," replied Denis; "but the lawyer who has my affairs in hand is coming to-morrow."

"Bring him with you," cried Sir Charles. "I may know him, perhaps."

"Mr. MacNiven, of Lincoln's Inn Fields."

Sir Charles shook his head.

"No, I never heard the name. Still, that does not matter. Bring him, by all means. I would like our few Protestant neighbours to meet you, but I am afraid it's too late now. Still—"

"Pray don't think of troubling about such a thing," cried Denis quickly. "I would much rather not meet them at present. Shall we leave the matter open? You see, I don't know how long Mr. MacNiven can stay, and I know there are a great many things we shall have to discuss with Mulligan and Breen, the lawyers of my late uncle."

"Oh, but you must manage somehow. You've no idea,

Mr. Kildare, how delighted I am to have you as a neighbour. There have been all sorts of conjectures about who would inherit the Kildare estates when Michael Kildare died. You see, there has been a mystery about it all ; and none of the Kildares, as far as I am aware, have ever mentioned you in any way."

"I suppose not," replied Denis. "The circumstances were somewhat peculiar." He hesitated a second, and then reflected that Sir Charles was Lenore's father. "I will tell you just what they were," he went on, and then he gave an outline of the story.

"Splendid, splendid !" cried Sir Charles. "Why, it is quite a romance. Your mother must have been a noble woman, Mr. Kildare. We heard that you were a Protestant, and of course, being a Protestant, we knew you would be a Unionist ; but fancy old Denis Kildare's hopes being frustrated. And fancy, too, a Protestant inheriting everything ! It is enough to make him turn in his grave. Well, Mr. Kildare, you'll only have a very few neighbours, but you'll have a welcome fit for a king. Do you know everyone is talking about you ?"

"I was not aware that my coming was known outside the village."

"Why, I knew yesterday afternoon," cried Sir Charles. "Do you think we could be quiet about such a piece of news ? As I said, it's the talk of the countryside. And the best of it is that a Kildare should be a Protestant and a Unionist !"

"I don't know that I am a Unionist," replied Denis.

"What !" cried Sir Charles, aghast. "You don't mean to say that you believe in Home Rule, that you have any sympathy with the Parnellite gang, who would separate England from Ireland ? You can't mean it !"

"Oh, no, I don't believe in Home Rule," cried Denis, "although, mark you, from one standpoint it seems just ; but I could never give my vote to hand over the Protestants of Ireland to the dominion of Rome."

"Thank God for that !" cried the baronet. "You are on the right track there. Home Rule for Ireland would be Rome Rule ; it would mean handing over the country to the priests, to Rome. It would be playing a traitor's part. Why, the Roman Catholics hate England. They would

take up arms against her to-morrow. Oh! I know them. My agent has been shot at, and I and my people have been in danger of our lives. Marauding, murderous gangs made Ireland a hell, and they were backed by the priests. That was why I could not believe you could be associated with rebels and murderers. Don't mistake me. The people, if left alone, are all right; but they have the priests, they have Rome behind them, and that's where the danger lies!"

The baronet had changed from the kind, courteous gentleman, and had become almost bitter in his denunciation.

"What I meant by saying I was not a Unionist was that I did not identify myself with the political party which has adopted that name," cried Denis.

"But you will, you will. There are only two political parties in Ireland. The one is loyal, and the other is disloyal. The one stands by the old flag and the old union between England and Ireland, while the other hates England like poison, and makes no secret of its hatred. Very possibly if I lived in England I should be a Liberal, except on this one point; but in Ireland it's impossible. The only political party any loyalist—for that matter, any gentleman—can join is the party that fights against Rome. Indeed, nearly all the few good Roman Catholic families in Ireland are Unionists. No decent, God-fearing man could hand over the country to that marauding crew who, the tools of the priests, call themselves the Nationalist party. Why, even if my own brother were to join that gang I would disown him!"

"There are not many old Irish Roman Catholic families around here, I suppose?" asked Denis.

"Your family was the only one," replied Sir Charles, "and now that you—oh, it's splendid, splendid!"

"I heard something about an old family called O'Hara," suggested Denis.

Sir Charles laughed. "Oh, you've heard of old Pat O'Hara, have you? Yes, in a sense he does belong to a good family—to the Irish nobility, in fact. But, of course, he's impossible, absolutely impossible. First of all, he's a savage, and, second, he's a rebel. He has tremendous power over the people, I'll admit, and is a thorn in the side of the priests; and that places him in an impossible posi-

tion. You see, the Irish gentry would have nothing to do with him, even if he desired it ; while the priests hate him. I shouldn't be surprised if he gets murdered some day. The great pity is about his granddaughter."

"What about her ?" asked Denis quickly.

"I suppose she's a kind of beautiful savage. I don't know her myself, but I'm told she's a perfect specimen of the old dream of Irish beauty. She's as wild as a colt, and as lawless as a savage. I've heard that the villagers worship her, just as they worship old Pat. But the poor child is cut off from decent people. She lives alone with that old savage."

"But why don't you try and do something for her ?"

"Impossible, simply impossible. You see, it would mean a kind of intimacy with the old man, and that is impossible to any respectable man."

When Sir Charles left that night it was on the understanding that, if possible, Denis should come to dinner on the following night, and the young man retired with his mind full of rosy visions of the following day. He was no longer lonely ; he was no longer in a land of strangers. The visit of Lenore's father had made all the difference.

"When I know how my money affairs stand, I must make things gay," he reflected. "I'll get some menservants and some horses. I'll get the stables done up, too, and make the place habitable. Then there must be a jollification. There must be a feast for the tenants, and it's possible I may do something to break down the barriers between the Catholics and the Protestants. And then—" He dared not put his further thoughts into words ; but the central figure in everything was Lenore, the lovely child he had seen on the River Fal, who had since grown to be a beautiful woman.

The next day Mr. MacNiven arrived, and Denis was closeted for several hours with lawyers. At first his affairs seemed to look very black, but presently, when cosmos was brought out of chaos, they assumed a brighter appearance. He found, too, that his legal training became of great value to him, and he was able to set Messrs. Mulligan and Breen right on several points. Indeed, these gentlemen were very much disappointed in him, for while Irish law procedure was different to that in England, they quickly found that he

knew more than they, and that he meant to have his own way. These gentlemen found that, instead of having more control over affairs than they had during the reign of Michael Kildare, they would have less, and, what was perhaps more to the point, they had a trained lawyer to deal with, who was remarkably wide-awake.

These affairs kept them far on to the evening, and Denis was beginning to despair of seeing Lenore Tyrone that night, when the Irish lawyers remembered that they had an engagement in Cork and must return immediately. Perhaps if Denis had been more convivial in his tastes these gentlemen might have postponed their Cork appointment; but the whisky bottle did not appear; and as there were no signs of it they seemed in a hurry to get away. Thus it came about that he was able to send a message to Clonnell—which was the name of Sir Charles's house—that, while he could not arrive in time for dinner, he and Mr. MacNiven hoped to come over for an hour or so about nine o'clock. Mr. MacNiven agreed to this arrangement rather eagerly. He had never visited the house of an old Irish family, he said, and was anxious to do so. Thus, shortly before nine o'clock, they were spinning up Sir Charles's drive in a conveyance Denis had been able to procure from the village.

As may be imagined, Denis was wildly excited, although he did his best to appear calm. The night, too, was of a nature to arouse all the romance in a young man's heart. The moon sailed in an almost cloudless sky, spring was in the air, and the shadows cast by the overhanging trees were full of that mystery which appeals to the young heart.

"I should judge that your friend has a fine place," remarked the lawyer, as presently the house came in sight.

But Denis did not speak. He was thinking, not of the grey stone mansion, but of one who lived there. He never asked himself whether he might not, after all, be disappointed in her, and whether all his dreams and hopes might be shattered. He was only a boy, and boys who are in love with an ideal are not very critical. He never asked himself whether she would possess the graces with which he had endowed her; that did not matter; he would

see her. He felt like the man who wrote the old song, "My Queen":

"I will not dream of her tall and stately,  
She that I love may be fairy bright.  
I will not say she shall walk sedately,  
Whatever she does will sure to be right.  
And she may be humble or proud, my lady,  
Or that sweet calm which is just between;  
But whenever she comes, she will find me ready  
To do her homage, my Queen, my Queen!"

And he was on his way to her now; he would see her, he would speak to her.

The conveyance dashed up to the entrance, and a few seconds later the two men stood in a spacious hall. Evidently Sir Charles was a rich man, as well as a lover of beautiful things. It was apparent, too, that he had electric light installed, for the place was brilliantly lit with that method of illumination. Costly rugs were scattered around on the marble floor, while handsome paintings adorned the walls. A well-trained manservant noiselessly attended to their needs, and presently showed them into a large, lofty room.

Sir Charles met his guests with a hearty greeting, and then introduced them to a rather faded lady, who struck Denis as having a kind face, but was something of an invalid.

"This is my wife, Mr. Kildare," said Sir Charles. "She was awfully disappointed that you could not come to dinner."

"But am more delighted to see you now," replied Lady Tyrone.

What Denis said to his hostess he did not know. Indeed, he paid very little heed to what she said, for his eyes were travelling quickly around the room in search of the one but for whom he would not have left his house that night. But she was nowhere to be seen, and his heart felt like lead. Again the old fears haunted him, and that which had seemed certain became impossible. He tried to hide his disappointment as well as possible, however, and did his best to listen to what Lady Tyrone was saying to him, although that lady came to the conclusion that their new neighbour was rather a dull, uninteresting young man

Then his heart gave a leap, and the blood rushed to his face. He heard the sound of laughter outside the door, and two girls entered.

Yes, it was she, and his heart thrilled its recognition. Two girls had entered, but he only saw one of them ; the other, as far as he was concerned, did not exist. It was the same face he had seen four times before, altered a little perhaps by the passing years, but to the lad she was more beautiful than ever.

He stood like one entranced, his eyes fixed intently upon her. He remembered the brown hair, the limpid eyes, the delicate tinted cheeks he had seen long years before. She was a child then, just a child who promised to be a beautiful woman. And she had more than fulfilled her promise. She was to him a dream of perfection. But she was a child still, a child whose nature was unsoiled by the grime of the world. Perhaps, too, her loveliness was enhanced by her surroundings, and by the knowledge that she bore an old name, the daughter of the owner of all he saw. Others might be inclined to criticise her, but to Denis she was perfection. She had come, and he was ready to worship her. She was more than the Lenore of his dreams—she was perfect.

He did not know how it was, but before long he found himself by her side, and they were alone. There were others in the room, but he did not know it. He had been introduced to a rather jolly girl, Beatrice Rosscommon by name, but he had not the slightest idea what she looked like or where she had gone. Mr. MacNiven was talking with her just then, but Mr. MacNiven might have been in his office in Lincoln's Inn Fields for all Denis knew. He was at Lenore's side. He was looking into the depths of her eyes, he was feasting on her beauty, he was listening to the music of her voice. He was in heaven.

"I hope you will like Ireland, Mr. Kildare."

"I shall love it—I love it already," he cried fervently. "In fact, I always loved it when I never even dreamed of—of what would happen."

"And I suppose Kildare Castle is a beautiful house ? "

"You must come to see it, Miss Tyrone. I want you to tell me how it ought to be decorated. It suggests a ruin

just now, but I am sure it can be made rather—fine. But I have not a bit of taste ; you must help me."

"I daresay you'll live in England a great deal. Most Irish people do. I mean Irish people who—who can."

"Do you go to England much ?"

"No ; I love Ireland too much. Of course the country is being changed. Since the Land Purchase Act people like my father—I mean those who own land—are living more and more out of the country. But I love it. I shall always want to live here."

"I have not the slightest desire to go back to England," cried Denis. "I am of Irish blood, you know, and I am going to live in Ireland and for Ireland. I am going to give my life to healing the open wound of Irish life."

"But you do not think of separating it from England ? That would be awful."

"Never !" cried Denis ; "but I am going to live for Ireland all the same. It is my duty. Why can't the Irish peasantry be happy, and prosperous, and enlightened, and free ? I don't know how it can be done yet, I am so ignorant of the life, but I shall learn. You who know Ireland so well must tell me."

"I would love to," replied Lenore, "but, oh ! wasn't it funny what father told me ?"

"What did he tell you ?"

"Oh, about your seeing him before."

"Oh, yes, I recognised you the moment I saw you. Did you not recognise me ?"

The girl's face flushed. "Now I look at you again, I think I do remember seeing you in Cornwall," she said ; "but you—have—altered."

"I should have known you anywhere."

"What, after seeing me only once and when I was a little girl ?"

"Oh, but I have seen you more than once. I have seen you four times."

"Four times ! Father only spoke of your seeing me once. Where have you seen me ?"

"The first time was in Cornwall," replied Denis ; "the second was in Oxford. You were at the Martyrs' Memorial. I—I wanted to speak to you then. Then I saw you, years

after, at Euston. You got into the Irish boat train. It was late one evening."

The girl's face flushed. "Fancy your remembering that," she said.

"Didn't you see me?" asked Denis. "I felt sure you did. You see," he added, "I was very rude. I—I got into the same train, and I stood in the corridor, and saw you. I thought you might be going to Ireland, but I was disappointed."

"Did you go to Ireland?"

"Yes."

"I thought you told me you had never been in Ireland until you came to Kildare."

"Well, I hadn't—that is, properly. I returned to England by the same boat."

"Then you went to Dublin first for the pleasure of coming across and going back again?"

"No: that is, yes—in a way. You see, I've always been interested in Ireland," he added.

The girl looked rather confused, and it seemed to Denis that she read his mind like an open book.

"But what of the fourth time, Mr. Kildare? I don't remember—that is, you have not told me of the fourth time."

"I would rather not tell you about that," he replied, after a few seconds' silence; "that is, not now. Indeed—I—I couldn't, Miss Tyrone."

"Couldn't; why not?"

"I really couldn't tell you now," he stammered, "but I'd like to some day, if I may."

## CHAPTER XIII

### A RIVAL

IF Denis was not in love when he left Clonnell that night, he was, at any rate, in a state of blissful intoxication. Never before had he been so happy, never was life so joyous. Mr. MacNiven spoke about his conversations with Lady Tyrone and Beatrice Rosscommon, but Denis remembered nothing that the lawyer had said, or the answers he had given. Everything was swallowed up in the fact that he had seen Lenore, had spoken with her, and had promised himself that he would see her again. Loneliness was impossible now, and the great house he had inherited would no longer appear like a vault. Lenore lived near, and during the coming days he would constantly bask in the sunshine of her smiles. He did not ask himself if she could ever care for him, neither had he any definite thoughts about the future. The picture of the coming days was somewhat dim, but that did not matter. Lenore lived in Ireland, she was his neighbour, and was more than his fancies had ever painted her.

It is possible that a passing stranger might have seen nothing in Lenore Tyrone but a pretty girl who carried herself well and dressed in good taste. He might have spoken of her as somewhat cold in her manner, and said that she lacked the buoyancy and joyousness which should belong to a young girl. But Denis thought nothing of this. To him she was perfect, the fulfilment of the dream of his life. Never, even on the night when he had read Poe's poem and his imagination had been fired by the poet's fervent words, had he dreamed of anyone as perfect as this young Irish girl. He had no sense of disillusionment. The reality was more perfect than the dreams.

The horse dashed swiftly along the dry, hard road,

and the countryside seemed like fairyland. He would meet Lenore again, and life would all be full of sunshine. Then, suddenly, he felt as though someone had stabbed him.

"Is Miss Tyrone engaged?"

It was Mr. MacNiven who spoke. The words were uttered in a matter-of-fact sort of way, just as if the lawyer had asked whether a certain farm had been let.

"I don't know. I never thought of it," he stammered.

"I didn't look closely, but I thought I saw a ring on her third finger. I should think it very probable. She struck me as an attractive girl, and would be a good match. Besides, she must be over twenty. I'm told that Irish girls marry young."

"I never thought of such a thing."

But for the sound of the horse's hoofs and the roll of the wheels, the lawyer must have noticed that his voice was hoarse and unnatural, but, never dreaming of the state of Denis's feelings, he went on :

"I fancy she must be.. I noticed her fondling a little Pekinese spaniel, and that dark-eyed, pretty girl to whom I was talking said that it had been given to Miss Tyrone by a particular friend. Of course I didn't ask any questions, but I judged it to be a present from her fiancé."

Instantly everything had changed for Denis. The sky was no longer bright. The scene was no longer fairyland. What joy would his inheritance bring him if Lenore belonged to another?

Still, he said nothing, and so controlled his feelings that the lawyer had no suspicion of the pain he had caused him.

The horse dashed up to Kildare Castle, and a few seconds later they sat by the library fire.

"I'll just have another cigar before I go to bed," said the lawyer. "The day was beautifully warm, but the night is cold. I'm thankful for the fire."

Denis did not speak, but pushed a box of cigars to Mr. MacNiven.

"I say, you look very pale, Mr. Kildare. I expect you are tired."

"I am a bit. It has been rather an exciting day."

"Yes, I suppose it has to you. And yet I feel as fresh

as a daisy. I fancy we of the older generation are tougher than you young fellows."

"Oh, I shall be all right after a night's rest."

"That's right. By the way, I had no idea that, even in Ireland, political feeling could be so strong."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, Sir Charles was simply fanatical in his opposition to Home Rule. He was angry beyond words with me because I defended, even in an academical way, the principle of self-government for this country. Personally, I have no strong feelings about it; I am not a politician, I am a lawyer. Still, for the sake of keeping up conversation, I—well, kind of defended it. But I gave it up. Sir Charles grew angry. He is of Presbyterian descent, and although there is not a church belonging to that communion here, he still holds by that faith. He said that I, as springing from the old Scottish stock, ought to be ashamed of myself for betraying my faith. That it was nothing short of treason to talk of handing over Ireland to Rome. My word, young man, you'll have to be careful. If you were to advocate Home Rule, Sir Charles would close his doors against you."

"You need not fear about that," cried Denis; "I hate the thought of it."

"The correct attitude for an Irish landlord," replied the lawyer drily. "Personally, I'm not a convinced Home Ruler myself, but I see a great deal in it."

Presently, to the young man's relief, the lawyer finished his cigar, and they went to bed.

"I must find out," he cried, as soon as he was alone, "I shall never rest until I know. But it cannot be, it simply cannot. I should have known. I should have felt. Besides, if she were engaged, her fiancé would have been there, or some mention would have been made."

But he was not satisfied. The memory of his old dreams came back to him. He remembered that in his night wanderings there had always been some power or person who had come between them. Never once had any of his dreams about her ended happily.

Presently, when he fell asleep, he fancied that the old raven which had been a pet among the undergraduates at Balliol College came to his room, and it seemed to him

to be the incarnation of the ungainly fowl in Edgar Allan Poe's weird dream. He tried to recall the poem, but the only lines he could remember were the words :

"Tell this soul by sorrow laden, if within some distant Aiden  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden, clasp a rare and radiant maiden,  
Whom the angels name Lenore ?  
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.' "

After that, the other poem which had so attracted him in his boyhood's days somehow became merged into this. Annabel Lee and Lenore became one and the same, and he fancied himself following her to a far-off ghostly shore, while behind him came the man to whom Lenore had given her heart, the man who would always stand between him and his heart's desire.

When he awoke the morning sunlight streamed into his room, and the birds were singing on the tree-branches. The year was at the spring, and the day at the morn. Hastily dressing, he went outside, and, as if by magic, all his dark thoughts were dispelled. The sun shone in unclouded splendour and life was beautiful again. Yes, Browning was right. God was in His heaven, and all was right with the world.

A few hours later there was a further interview with the lawyers, and then, towards evening, Mr. MacNiven left him. Everything was in a fair way to formal settlement, Denis was assured, and Mr. MacNiven was anxious to get back to England.

The young man was not sorry for the lawyer to go. In a sense he was glad of his society, but he wanted to be alone ; he wanted an answer to the question that was haunting him.

In spite of what Mr. Mulligan had told him, he had fully made up his mind to go to the Protestant church on the following Sunday morning, but it happened that a thunder-storm passed over the district, and the rain fell in such torrents that it was literally impossible to go out. When noon came the clouds passed away, and Denis made up his mind to brave popular opinion, and go in the evening. This resolution, however, came to nothing, for shortly after lunch a servant came from Clonnell bearing a letter from Sir Charles Tyrone, asking him to spend the afternoon and evening at his house. This invitation Denis was not

slow to accept, and by four o'clock he again found himself on the drive which led to Lenore's home.

On this occasion Denis willingly allowed himself to be monopolised by Lady Tyrone. He longed to know whether there was any truth in Mr. MacNiven's suggestion, and before long the truth came out. He discovered that a Mr. Stephen Rosscommon, the brother of Beatrice Rosscommon, who was staying there, had long been paying attention to Lenore, but that no engagement had been arranged. Lady Tyrone, who was given to sudden confidences, hinted that the match would not be displeasing to either Sir Charles or herself, as Mr. Rosscommon came of a good old Irish family, and was heir to a fine fortune. He was, moreover, a strong Protestant, an ardent Unionist, and a most estimable young man.

"He is going to fight the Nationalist candidate at the next election, too," remarked that lady.

"I thought Unionist candidates had very little chance in this part of Ireland," suggested Denis. He tried to speak naturally, although his heart was very bitter.

"Under ordinary circumstances I don't suppose he would," replied Lady Tyrone, "but the case is peculiar. I suppose this is almost the only part of Ireland where the Irish party is divided, but old Pat O'Hara—I think you have heard of him—has tremendous influence, simply tremendous. He is a dreadful old creature, of course, but there it is. He is one of the few Roman Catholics who is not at the beck and call of the priests. Indeed, I suppose he often opposes them."

"And does he favour this—that is, Mr. Stephen Rosscommon?" asked Denis.

"Oh, dear no; but he has such influence that the Irish vote is divided. Indeed, they cannot fix upon a candidate. Pat's followers will not support the nominee of the priest, or anyone sent by the Molly Maguires, while, of course, the priests oppose Pat. We are hoping, therefore, that, the Nationalists being divided, Stephen will have a good chance. He's such a splendid speaker too. He has the Irish gift of oratory, and although he is a strong Protestant, he is a great favourite among the peasants."

"Is—is he a young man?" asked Denis.

"Quite young," replied Lady Tyrone; "not more than

thirty at the most. Of course Lenore is much younger, only just twenty, in fact. Between ourselves, Mr. Kildare, I expect nothing will be settled between Lenore and Stephen until her twenty-first birthday, unless Stephen happens to get into Parliament."

"Pardon me, but I do not see what that has to do with it," said Denis, almost angrily.

"Oh, Lenore is such an ardent Unionist, and such an enthusiastic politician, that if Stephen were to win a Nationalist seat I believe it would turn the scales in his favour."

"Miss Tyrone has not made up her mind, then?" said Denis eagerly. His eyes shone with joy at the possibilities which Lady Tyrone's words suggested.

"Lenore is a strange girl," said Lady Tyrone. "Ever since she was a child she has had peculiar fancies, and would never do exactly what we expected of her. The truth is, I don't believe Lenore knows what she wants. 'I've no desire to get married,' she has said to me again and again. But I take no notice of that, Mr. Kildare. Girls always act strangely when they are of Lenore's age. I know she likes Stephen too, and he's so fond of her. For that matter, he's been wanting her for years; indeed, he asked Sir Charles for her when she was only seventeen, and Lenore has practically promised to give her answer on her twenty-first birthday."

"When will that be?" asked Denis.

"The first of October," replied Lady Tyrone; "but we may have an election any time, now, as the Nationalist member is very ill, and anxious to resign. And if Stephen were to get in, I believe Lenore would make up her mind right away. You've no idea what an enthusiastic politician she is, Mr. Kildare, or how she hates and detests Rome Rule, which, of course, Home Rule would mean. Sir Charles and I regard the matter as practically settled now, but Lenore will not admit this."

In spite of himself, Denis felt happy. Lenore had not pledged herself, and he felt himself free to woo and win her if he could.

"Does Mr. Rosscommon live near here?" he asked presently.

"Only about twelve miles away; but he went over to England a few days ago, and I don't think he can be back

yet. I am sure he would have come over if he had been in Ireland. What do you think of Beatrice Rosscommon, Mr. Kildare? I am exceedingly fond of her. She is such a nice girl, and is always bright and cheerful," and Lady Tyrone looked at Denis with the desire for matchmaking shining in her eyes.

"I am afraid I didn't pay her much attention," said Denis.

"How ungallant," laughed the lady. "Perhaps," she added, after a second, "you will be bringing a lady from England to be mistress of the Castle."

"Nothing can be further from my mind," replied Denis eagerly.

"That is right," said Lady Tyrone. "You must be thoroughly an Irishman now. Everyone will expect it of you."

"I mean to be. I am just going to live for my tenants and my country," he replied. "I have always loved Ireland, and now that fate has brought me here, I am going to give my life for her welfare."

The lady smiled at the young man's words, and then, with the matchmaking instinct strong within her, said, "But you cannot do this without a wife, Mr. Kildare. You must find some real nice Irish girl, and make her mistress of the Castle."

Before Denis could reply Lady Tyrone gave a cry of pleasure. "Why, there is Mr. Rosscommon," she said; "he has come back from England in spite of what I said. I am sure that you and he will be great friends."

As may be imagined, Denis felt anything but kindly towards the new-comer, although he greeted the young man politely. He was very quiet for some time after he came, and watched him closely.

Stephen Rosscommon was, as Lady Tyrone said, about thirty years of age, and was by no means bad looking. He had some pretensions to learning, having graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, and as all his interests were confined to Ireland, took a strong interest in his country. He spent a good deal of time in England, but could by no means be called an absentee landlord. He owned an estate which he had inherited from his mother, and when his father died would be a wealthy man. He rode good

horses, hunted, shot, and was fairly popular with his fellows. He had political ambitions, and saw visions of himself at Westminster, fighting the Unionist cause against Nationalists. He had been invited to fight an Ulster seat, but wanted to gain distinction by wresting a seat from the Nationalists in their own stronghold.

He was fairly tall, although not so tall as Denis, had sandy-coloured hair, light grey eyes, and spoke with an Irish accent.

"Well, what news, Stephen?" asked Sir Charles.

"I've been formally invited to stand for the Connella Division," replied the young man.

"Good. I felt sure you would. Of course we are just outside, and I'm not on the committee; but Castleton told me it was practically decided. By the way, Mr. Kildare here will be one of your constituents."

"The Kildares have always been on the other side," remarked Rosscommon.

"Oh, but Mr. Kildare is a Protestant, and a Unionist."

Some explanations took place here which made Denis very uncomfortable. He did not like his affairs and opinions being discussed by Rosscommon.

"My word, Mr. Kildare, you will be a godsend to me," cried Rosscommon. "It is said that Geary, the Nationalist member, has been wanting to resign for a long time, but has not been allowed to do so because of the division in the Nationalist camp. But there may be an election at any time. He's very ill, and I hear that he's not likely to live long. I am sure I shall be able to claim your support."

But Denis gave an evasive answer. He was not in a frame of mind to promise to help the man who wanted to marry the girl of whom he had dreamed for so many years.

He was somewhat cold and constrained in his demeanour, too, which the young Irishman was not slow to notice, and presently, when he saw Denis and Lenore talking together, Rosscommon's eyes shone with no pleasant light. For Denis had made up his mind that he would be no timid lover.

"It is just glorious outside," he said to Lenore; "won't you show me around the grounds?"

The girl's face flushed. She cast a questioning glance at Rosscommon, and then followed him out of doors.

"Your mother tells me you are a keen politician," he said when they were alone.

"Yes, that is the only reason why I wish I were a man."

"How is that?"

"I should go into Parliament and fight our battle. Oh, I would rather be the leader of the Irish Unionist party than be Prime Minister."

"But would it offer great scope? The Irish Unionist party is a very small affair."

"Small," cried the girl, "it may be, but it seems the centre of everything. Fancy saving Ireland from these Home Rulers. I dread to think what we should become if Home Rule came to pass. Fancy having our laws made for us by men who are kept out of Irish Society. You've no idea, Mr. Kildare. Many of them come from peasants' cabins. They have no sense of honour, they are the tools of the priests, they have been mixed up with everything lawless and disloyal, they would sell the Empire to-morrow if they could; and now that the Liberals have promised to pass Home Rule it seems to me that a Protestant would be a traitor to everything good if he did not fight for the Union."

Denis was disappointed, in spite of himself. He held her opinions, but he did not like her method of expression. It seemed little, and did not accord with his dreams of Lenore.

"If it comes, we shall leave Ireland," she went on.

"Leave Ireland?"

"Yes. Father says he could not live in Ireland under Home Rule. He would sell the old home and go to England. And that would break my heart, for I love it more than words can say. Besides, why should the loyal, the educated, the prosperous people of the country be placed under the rule of these disloyal, ignorant people, who are simply the creatures of the priests? But you'll feel this just as we do before you've been here long, Mr. Kildare."

"I am sure I shall," said Denis fervently. "Indeed, when I was in Oxford, although I am a Liberal in politics, I felt I could not support Home Rule. I hate priestcraft as much as you do, Miss Tyrone."

"I am so glad," cried the girl. "Wouldn't it be grand if you, too, could go into Parliament and fight our cause?"

Of course politics in Ireland is generally such a vulgar thing that decent people avoid it. I mean in the South and West of Ireland, of course. You see, the people have to vote as the priests tell them, and, of course, they fight against Protestants, who are nearly all Unionists. But promise me you will, if you can, Mr. Kildare—promise you'll stand by the old flag."

She looked wondrously beautiful as she spoke. The setting sun shone upon her hair, and her eyes were lit up with enthusiasm.

"Perhaps," she went on, "you, being a Kildare, might get the people to vote for you. Wouldn't it be grand if you and Mr. Rosscommon could go together? Just fancy saving the people from the priests, Mr. Kildare, and breaking their power."

"Would you like me to?" he cried, his heart beating fast.

"I would love it," she cried. "Now, promise you will!"

"I am going to live for Ireland," cried Denis. "But I don't want to do anything ignorantly. I want to study the life of the people and understand their needs."

"That's splendid. Do you know, Mr. Kildare, it seems like a poem, a romance, that you, a descendant of the Kildares, who have always been Roman Catholic, and have boasted of their Irish prejudices, should be a Protestant and a Unionist."

"Are you fond of poetry?" asked Denis, who was not eager to talk politics any longer.

"I think so. Yes."

"Who is your favourite poet?"

"I don't think I have one; but, in spite of what I have said, I think I love to read the old Irish songs and poems best. Have you a favourite poet?"

"I don't know; but the poems which have haunted me most are by a poet who died while almost a boy, and whose death was a tragedy."

"Who do you mean?"

"You ought to know him. I think he gave you your name. I never heard of anyone having it but you and the maiden in Edgar Allan Poe's 'Raven.'"

The girl shuddered. "It's horrible, isn't it?"

"What, the poem or the name?"

"Of course I mean the poem ; but the name is awful, too, isn't it ?"

"No," said Denis ; "There is no woman's name so beautiful to me. I have always thought of you by it."

The girl's face flushed, but she said nothing. Moreover, their conversation was interrupted at this juncture by the appearance of others, and Denis did not know whether she was pleased or angry.

During the remainder of the evening he had no other chance of speaking to her alone, for Rosscommon did his best to monopolise her. When he left the house, however, and she bade him good-night, his heart was beating fast for joy."

"I hope you will all come and see me soon," he said. "I will try and not be an ogre, although I live in a gloomy castle."

"I should love to," she replied. "And you will not forget your promise, will you ? I shall never forgive you if you are unfaithful to that."

He jumped on his horse and rode away with a laugh.

"What promise was that ?" said Rosscommon to Lenore, who stood by his side.

"Oh, nothing," replied the girl, and the young Irishman hated Denis Kildare from that moment.

During the next few weeks Denis was much engaged. He had certain alterations and repairs made to the house, he bought a motor-car and two horses, he made the stable fit to be used, and spent a good deal of money on the grounds. He also visited his tenants, and tried to understand the life of the peasantry. He became popular, too, in spite of the fact that he did not adhere to the faith which had been so dear to his ancestors. On Midsummer Day he threw open the grounds to practically the whole parish, and feasted the people in the good old-fashioned English style. It was a motley gathering, for even the poorest came, and, although it was the most prosperous time of the year, most of them were very near the poverty zone. Never till then did Denis realise the difference between the agricultural labourer in England and Ireland. As far as he knew, there was hardly a family among the Cornish peasantry but had their carefully preserved Sunday clothes, and, in most cases, they laid aside a little for a rainy day. But here dirt

and rags were plentiful. Many of them looked as though they never had a bath in their lives.

But everyone seemed happy, and merriment abounded. Father Meharry was there, but the Protestant rector did not come, neither did any of the Protestant gentry. He had invited them all, thinking how nice it would be if they would fraternise with the peasantry. But in this he was disappointed. The rector held very high, old-fashioned views concerning the treatment of the people, and was not at all pleased with the new squire's course of action. Besides, he was not on friendly terms with Father Meharry, and did not desire to meet him. Even Mr. Rosscommon did not come, although Denis urged upon him the wisdom of making a good impression upon his possible constituents, but Rosscommon pleaded another engagement. Neither could Sir Charles Tyrone be persuaded. "You will learn before long that English customs do not work in Ireland," he said, and blankly refused to come. His refusal naturally meant the absence of Lenore, so that the occasion did not bring Denis so much pleasure as he had hoped, although he rejoiced to see how happy and free from care the people seemed to be.

One thing struck him with great force, and that was the absolute submission of the people, especially of the poorest, to Father Meharry. Again he compared the sturdy independence of the Cornish people with the servility of the Irish. They bowed and scraped to the priest as though he were a supernatural being. His lightest wish was law. He told them what they must do, and what they must not do, as though they were children in a charity school. It is true that here and there was a man who seemed to resent his constant surveillance, but they said nothing. On the other hand, it must be admitted that, although he was an autocrat, he often made himself very pleasant. He laughed and cracked jokes with some of the people with great good-humour, but he never forgot that these people must yield him absolute obedience. Indeed, it was evident that he regarded most of the people as ignorant children, while he was their director, whom they dared not disobey.

"Holloa, Biddy," Denis heard him say, "I see you didn't wash the children."

"Faith, and I hadn't time, yer rivrinse. Besides, what would be the good? They'd not be nearly so happy if they were clean, and sure they'd not be me own childer at all if they were clean."

"I'm ashamed of ye, Biddy, and the new squire so kind. I've a good mind to send ye all home."

"Oh, plase, yer rivrence, don't do that. Faith, and it's me that haven't had such a faist fer years; and if you send me home, we shall miss the supper."

"And it would just serve ye right if I sent ye home without supper."

"Ah, but yer revrence couldn't do it, and me wid a baby at me breast an' all."

"Well, I'll look it over for this time, but see that you send them clean to chapel on Sunday."

Father Meharry turned, and saw Denis standing near.

"I've just been scolding Biddy McPherson for not washing her children," said the priest. "I have been very near packing her, and a lot more, home without supper."

"But they wouldn't go if you did, would they?" asked Denis

"Wouldn't go!" cried the priest. "If they didn't I'd——" But he did not finish the sentence. Perhaps he did not understand the look on the young man's face. "You have a lot to learn about dealing with these people," he added presently.

"I'd like to hear a parson talk to Cornish people like that," thought the young man. The simple scene had partially opened his eyes to the power of the priest over the Irish peasantry, a power so great that all their independence had been sapped.

Another scene took place some time after, which not only further opened the young man's eyes, but was destined to be a considerable factor in the young man's life, and led to issues which had a tremendous influence on his life and career.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SCHOOLMASTER

“SURE, Father, but you’ll not be depriving me of my living.”

“You must do as I tell you, or out ye go, neck and crop.”

“But I can never get another school.”

“I’ve told you what I’ll have done; if you don’t do it you must take the consequences.”

“But I’ll be ruined, Father. It’s bread and butter; it’s my future career; and I not married three years, and two children already.”

“You should have thought of that before you dared to disobey me.”

It was at this point that Denis realised that he was eavesdropping. He had just left the conservatory and was passing through a shrubbery when he heard such piteous tones that he involuntarily stopped and listened. He recognised the voice as belonging to the village schoolmaster, who was evidently overwhelmed with fear. The other speaker was Father Meharry, who was undoubtedly very angry. It was only a few seconds that he remained standing. Realising that there was a difference between the priest and the schoolmaster he quickly passed on. Nevertheless, the pitiful tones of the man haunted him. What had he done? Why did he stand in such fear of Father Meharry? He had met the schoolmaster once or twice, who had struck him as being a man of more than average intelligence, although lacking in will-power. Why should he stand in such deadly fear of the priest? He was tempted, for the man’s sake, to listen further, but instinctively moved on. After all, he felt he could not do a dishonourable thing, even if, by so doing, he could help a man in trouble.

Still, what he had heard, unimportant as it might be, determined him on a course of action, and impulsive as he had always been, he set about to act right away. It was now dark, and the time had come for the people to go home ; but Father Meharry had persuaded him some little time before to say a few words to the people.

"It's a great day for them, although none of your Protestant friends have come," said the priest, and there was a taunt in his voice ; "and I think it would be well if the new owner of Kildare would tell the people that he's glad to see them, and wants to be friends with them. It may help you some time," he added, and this time his words sounded to the young man like a threat.

Thus it was that the people all gathered on the lawn and Father Meharry made a speech. He said he was sure they'd want to thank their host, and then went on to enlarge upon Denis's advent into the parish. It was a clever speech, although it did not altogether please the young man. It assumed a certain authority and certain rights in relation to his position as priest. Father Meharry described the interest the Kildares had always taken in the old faith, how they had always stood by and supported the Church, and that not only Denis's uncle, but his grandfather, had been his dearest friends.

From the past Father Meharry came to the present. He hoped, he said, that Denis would be true to the traditions of his fathers, and support the truest friends of the people. "I've always been your friend," he said to the people, amidst great cheering, "and I shall look to Mr. Kildare to help me. Indeed, I look upon it as a right. It was I that made him a Catholic, for it was I who christened him while he was yet unconscious. It was I who heard from his father's own lips the promise that he should be trained in the true faith."

From this he went on to other matters, and Denis noticed that a reporter from a local paper was busy taking notes. On thinking afterwards over the speech, Denis reflected that Father Meharry had said but very little about religion, but what he had said required answering. But here he was met with a difficulty. He did not wish to wound the people's feelings by declaring, after what Father Meharry had said, that he was a Protestant ; at the same

time he could not sail under false colours. The priest had placed him in a difficult position, and the young man believed he had done so of set purpose. He knew, too, that he must be careful, or he might turn these simple peasants, who regarded Father Meharry's wishes as law, against him.

The priest wound up his remarks in true Irish fashion. He became very jocular, and then, having told a good story, called upon the people to give three cheers for their host, and to promise to pray that he might be true to the traditions of his race.

It was easy to see why Father Meharry had been anxious for the speechifying. It gave him such an opportunity as he would never have again for placing the young squire in a difficult position.

After a great deal of cheering the young man rose to reply, and again he noticed how eager the reporter seemed not to miss a word. This, and the curious look on Father Meharry's face, put Denis on his mettle. He determined that the priest should not score off him. He told them that he came there as an Irishman, and as a lover of Ireland. That he was proud to be a Kildare, and that no Kildare who ever lived had a greater desire to do good in the parish, and to be a friend to every tenant, both small and large, than he had.

"In that sense," he said, "I hope I shall prove to be worthy of the best traditions of my race. With regard to what Father Meharry did to me during my unconscious hours, I am not responsible. No man is responsible for whatever good, or harm, may be done to him when he was not a week old. Since I have grown old enough to think for myself, I have tried, no doubt with a great many failures, to be a Christian, and that, I take it, is what we all want to be. I have made this abundantly clear to Father Meharry, and he understands my position. Of this you may be sure, I respect your honest convictions, and I hope you will be true to them. For since I have come here, one great desire has filled my heart, which is that Catholics may be able to respect and love Protestants, and Protestants may be able to respect and love Roman Catholics, and that all may live on the best of terms together."

The people cheered, lustily, although Father Meharry looked sourly on the ground. Most of the poor, simple people could not read between the lines, or understand his deeper meaning. They heard only friendly words and friendly tones, and thought all was well. Besides, the young squire had treated them royally, and being a warm-hearted people they felt nothing but kindness towards him.

"And now a word about the future," cried Denis. "I told you just now that I loved Ireland, and that I had come to love Irish people. I want this to be a model parish. I want it to be filled with manly men and womanly women. I want to see the men thrifty, sober, intelligent, and independent. I want to see them think their own thoughts and live their own lives. I want you to think out the problems that face you for yourselves, ever seeking the guidance of Almighty God. I want the women ever to retain the good name for womanly modesty and virtue which has been their crown of glory in the past. I want you to have comfortable dwellings; I want to see them clean; I want to see your children clean, well fed, and happy. And I want to say two things more to you. The first is this: In so far as I can be a friend to you I will. If you are in any difficulty, and I can be of service to you, I will be."

Of course this was a foolish thing to say, as it opened the door to all sorts of abuse. It was the remark of an impulsive young man, who, had he lived in Ireland longer, would have offered his friendship in a different way; but the schoolmaster, who stood near, looked at him with eager eyes. Naturally there was great cheering, and more than one whispered to another concerning what they meant to get. Perhaps Denis saw his mistake, for he went on:

"But the help I can give you is very little. No man can really help you until you can help yourselves. As far as I can see, the great need of Ireland is self-dependence. Never depend on friends outside; you must be your own friends. Learn to act independently. Salvation must come from within. Prosperity does not primarily depend so much upon conditions as upon men. Father Meharry has been a friend to you in your poverty; but learn not to depend on Father Meharry. I am not for the moment referring to religious matters, but to temporal. Learn to

stand alone. Leading-strings may be necessary to a baby, but before a child can learn to run he must discard them. Crutches are very good for lame people, but only for lame people. That is why I want to see Irishmen stand erect, mentally and spiritually looking to God for aid."

It all came to an end presently. The people, only partly understanding what Denis had said, cheered lustily, and presently, with many "God bless ye's, yer honour!" they made their way down the drive.

When they had gone Father Meharry, an angry gleam in his eyes, turned to Denis.

" You don't know Irish people, or you'd never have made a speech like that," he said. The priest was bitterly disappointed that the young man should have answered him so completely. " And I tell you this too, it will do you no good to try to set the people against me."

" I do not understand," replied Denis rather coldly.

" What's all this talk about independence, about people thinking their own thoughts, and living their own lives, but setting the people against their priests? Why, if they did as you told them, we should have a parish full of atheists and socialists in twelve months."

" Freedom is always a necessity to a true manhood," said Denis, somewhat loftily.

" Better be without what you call manhood if it means godlessness and atheism," replied the priest. " Not that what you said will mean anything to them. You are not in England now. Irish people have been trained in the faith, and will be true to the Church whatever you may say."

" You mean that they will do what you tell them?" replied Denis.

" And what if I do?" cried Father Meharry. " Can they do better? Who's been a better friend to them than I? I've fed them when they've been hungry, clothed them when they've been naked, comforted them when they've been in trouble. Who could they turn to but me? All this high-falutin talk of yours would only do them harm if they took any notice of it. But they won't, I can tell you that."

" Who knows?" said the young man.

" I know. And I tell ye this, ye've done yourself a lot

of harm by that speech. It won't do here, sir ; it won't do. They are my children, sir ; and as my children they will obey me. They still have the old faith, thank God, and they know who their true friend is."

Denis did not reply ; he had no wish to quarrel with Father Meharry. He knew that if the priest turned the people against him his work would be more difficult. And yet he could not withdraw a word he had said. As he had gone around among the peasants he had pitied them. They did not live their own lives, or think their own thoughts. Father Meharry treated them as though they were children. On the whole he treated them kindly, and no doubt wanted to be their friend ; but still, they were under his control, and they dared do nothing which the priest told them not to.

During the few weeks he had been in Ireland he had visited several villages within twenty or thirty miles of his home, and he found that his own people were typical of the others. They were entirely dominated by the priests. The priest was the dictator in the cabins, in the schools, and in the church. The people dared not think their own thoughts ; and herein, as it seemed to him, lay Ireland's trouble. England did not rule Ireland, the Church ruled Ireland ; and thus the people in general, and the peasants in particular were not full-grown men and women, but children, doing what their spiritual pastors and masters told them, without daring to ask a question.

"I see what you had in your mind," went on Father Meharry. " You've been brought up on Protestant poison, and want to give it to my people ; but it won't do. It comes to this, when all is said and done. Ireland must be one of two things : either true to the Church and moral, or deny the Church and become immoral. You think that we priests have too much power over the people, and you would like to destroy that power. Well, now, suppose you did, what would happen ? As sure as the night follows the day they'd become immoral. You say they fear the Church ; but if the fear of the Church keeps them from a foul life, isn't it a good thing ? Once snap the chain by which the Church holds them, and the people would drift to licentiousness, to socialism, to atheism. Would you do that ? I tell you, all your fine talk about independence and liberty is so much poison. We've got the people, sir ;

we've got them, and we mean to keep them. It is for their good, for the welfare of Ireland, and for the glory of God."

"And do you think you can keep them for ever as children?" asked Denis. "They are becoming educated in spite of you. Can you keep an educated people for always in leading-strings?"

"We'll look after education," replied Father Meharry. "We have it, and we mean to hold it. But I must be going; only, before I go, I want to say this: Don't interfere in things that don't concern you. It will be worse for you if you do. You are a young man, and have been in Ireland twenty minutes; I've lived in the country all my life. I'm a son of the people; I was born in a peasant's cabin in Sligo. I know every detail of the people's lives. I lived in Ireland before you were born, and I know what we want better than you do. If you want to have your rents paid and live in peace, let things remain as they are. If you don't, you'll be rousing a hornets' nest."

The priest walked away, leaving the young man alone. It was now late, but the midsummer night was warm and light. The air was soft and balmy, and no sound reached his ears save now and then the echoes of distant shouts and laughter.

"Perhaps he's right after all," reflected Denis. "These people are children, and can never become like the people among whom I was reared. There may be drunkenness among them; they may be thriftless, and dirty, and content to dwell in their hovels; but the power of the priest does keep them from the worst kind of immorality. Hadn't they better remain as they are? As for giving them self-government, it would simply mean placing the country under the control of the priests."

He sighed as he spoke. The thing he had hoped for seemed to be impossible. Ireland must for ever remain under Rome Rule.

"Then there is the question of the Protestants," he went on. "If Home Rule were granted, the Protestants must be under Priest Rule. It would mean handing over the thrifty, prosperous, educated people of the country to be governed, through the priest, by the thriftless and ignorant. No, no; the conclusions I came to in Oxford were right, and Lenore is right. Only—

He heard a rustling among some shrubs near by, and turned quickly.

"If you please, Mr. Kildare."

"Who are you?"

"Excuse me for staying behind, but I wanted to speak with you. I am the schoolmaster, and John Mahoney is my name."

"Yes, I remember you perfectly. What do you want, Mahoney?"

"You offered to be a friend to us to-night, Mr. Kildare; and while you were speaking, I caught your eyes, and I thought you were speaking to me. I thought you knew my trouble, and might be my friend. For I need a friend, sir."

Denis's heart beat rapidly. If the truth must be told, he had the schoolmaster in his mind when he decided to offer his friendship to the people. He remembered what had passed between him and the priest, and he wanted to be Mahoney's friend. The man's pleading voice and evident sorrow had been with him ever since.

"Yes; well, what can I do for you?"

Mahoney looked around like one afraid. "Would you mind coming further away from the shrubs, sir?" he whispered; "there might be someone listening."

Denis spoke impatiently. "Who would dare to listen?" he said.

"I don't know, sir, but one can never tell."

Denis looked at Mahoney intently. Even in that light he saw that his face was full of fear, his voice was hoarse and tremulous.

"Come into the house, Mahoney," he said. "This is a special occasion, and all the people may not be gone."

"I don't think there's anyone here, sir; and if we go out on the lawn further no one can hear us. The servants would be sure to know if I went into the house, and I don't want Father Meharry to know I've been talking with you."

"You mean——" said Denis sharply, and then stopped.

"I know that things have a strange way in reaching the priest's ears," replied the schoolmaster.

"Wait here a minute, Mahoney," said the young man; "I'll be back shortly."

He hurried into the house, and found that the servants had gone to bed. The caterers from Connella had some time since departed with the necessary concomitants of the feast. All the eatables had either been consumed or taken away by the people.

"It's all right, Mahoney," he said when he returned. "Everyone has gone to bed. Come into the house."

A few minutes later they were seated in the library, the schoolmaster looking around apprehensively.

"Now, what is it?" asked Denis. "Don't be afraid to speak plainly."

The perspiration stood on the schoolmaster's forehead in thick beads, and his hands worked nervously.

"I'm to be turned out of the school," said Mahoney hoarsely, "if—"

"If what?"

"If I don't do what Father Mehaberry tells me."

"Well, he's the manager of the school, isn't he? Should you not do as he tells you?"

"But this has nothing to do with the schools, sir."

"You'd better tell me all about it," said Denis. "I can be of no service to you unless I understand everything."

"Of course our conversation is private," urged Mahoney.

"Certainly. Go on."

"These are the facts, sir. Some years ago my sister, who was brought up a Catholic, married a Protestant. He is a farmer, and a prosperous man. Three years ago he bought a farm at Ballanhessey, which is four miles from here—in the adjoining parish, in fact. The parish priest is Father Flint. Before my sister's husband bought the farm Father Flint had made an arrangement with the other farmer that he was to have some acres at a small rent. My brother-in-law, when he bought the farm, was willing to continue this arrangement, but Father Flint insisted on setting up a title of his own in return for absolutely nothing. My brother-in-law, as I told you, is a Protestant, and would not be dictated to, and would not give Father Flint a hundred pounds' worth of property for nothing. As a consequence, Flint organised a boycott against him, and my brother-in-law has had to be protected by the police ever since."

"But—but you are sure of this?" cried Denis excitedly.

"The facts are common property," replied the schoolmaster.

"But haven't the parishioners protested?"

"Not one of them has dared."\*

"But—but—"

"I assure you it is true. Mark you, it is not because my brother-in-law is a Protestant; it would have been just the same if he had been a Catholic. The trouble was that he opposed the priest in the thing he desired."

"Well, go on," said Denis.

"My brother-in-law has suffered terribly," replied Mahoney. "You see, a boycott in Ireland is a very serious thing. People refuse to trade with a man who is boycotted, and they do him all the harm possible. Naturally I pitied my sister too."

"Well, what did you do?" asked Denis impatiently.

"I spoke to Father Meharry," replied the schoolmaster. "He is a friend of Father Flint, and I thought he might influence him. It was no good. Father Meharry professed to take Father Flint's side. He kept me a long time waiting, but a week ago he told me he could do nothing."

"And then?"

"I thought of heaps of things. The Bishop is a kind-hearted man, and I thought he might see justice done. But, you see, if I wrote direct to the Bishop, it would eventually reach Father Meharry's ears."

"And what if it did?" asked Denis.

The schoolmaster looked at him in astonishment.

"Don't you see?" he said. "My place as schoolmaster depends on Father Meharry's favour. I dare not offend him."

"Well, go on."

"Well, I know the editor of the *Ballyshumer Gazette*. It is only a small paper, but there are a lot of Protestants in Ballyshumer, and my friend is a man of independent notions. So I wrote a letter over the signature of 'Fair Play,' and asked him to insert it."

"Which he did?"

"Yes, he did; but that of itself meant but little, as the paper is only read by people in that neighbourhood. So I

\* Up to this point the incident related actually took place in Ireland, and is typical of many others.

sent a marked copy of the paper to the Bishop, posting it in Cork."

" And has the Bishop done anything ? "

" Naturally, the Bishop has all sorts of cases brought before him, and does not act without due inquiry. So he sent the paper to Father Flint, and asked for his version of the facts. Father Flint came to Father Mehaberry, and the two together have traced the letter to me. It seems I used certain phrasing which Father Mehaberry thought was peculiar to me. Father Mehaberry accused me of it."

" And you could not deny it."

" How could I ? I did write the letter, and send it to the Bishop. The result of it is that Father Mehaberry has demanded that I shall write a personal letter to the Bishop, saying that what I wrote to the *Ballyshumer Gazette* was written under a misapprehension, owing to an incomplete knowledge of the facts, and that I have since heard that Father Flint has only made a just claim."

" And you—what have you done ? "

" It was only last night that Father Mehaberry told me to do this. I told him I must have time to think it over. To-night he has been to me, and told me that if I do not write the letter to the Bishop at once I must leave the school ? "

" That you must leave the school ? "

" Yes ; and you see it's my living, sir. I was appointed as master here by Father Mehaberry's favour, and—and he has been very kind to me. He's my priest too, sir, and I go to him for confession."

" And will you have to confess that you have come to me in this way ? "

" We go to confess our sins ; but if he asks me, sir, I—I should tell him."

" And if he does not ? "

" It's no sin, sir, and I should say nothing. He thinks I'm gone home, and if no one tells him he'll have no idea I have been here."

Denis was silent a few seconds. " Let us understand the matter fully," he said. " Fathers Mehaberry and Flint are anxious that the Bishop shall take no notice of your accusation, and they demand that you shall write to the Bishop confessing that you wrote the letter, and that you did

so under a misapprehension of the facts. Would that be true?"

"No, sir; everything is just as I said."

"Then, of course, you couldn't write."

"But think what will become of me, sir? I shall be turned out of the school, and out of my house. And I have two little children, one at the breast."

"Get another school."

"Get another school! How, sir? I couldn't get another school."

"But there are constant vacancies."

"Yes, but who would take me? Don't you understand, sir? There are six thousand Catholic schools in Ireland, and every one of them is under the complete control of the priest. The priest engages, and the priest discharges. Suppose I applied for a vacant school. 'Where were you last?' asks the priest, and I should have to tell him. He would write to Father Meharry, and what sort of a testimonial would I get?"

"But surely the priest cannot discharge you without sufficient reason."

"The priests have absolute control over both teachers and schools. The whole of the elementary education of Ireland is under a completely worked system, and the priests control that system. In a way, sir, we schoolmasters are under the complete power of the priest, body and soul."

"But surely there is some committee, some board of managers."

"There is no committee, no board of managers; the priests have absolute control. That's why there's no hope for me. If any Catholic schoolmaster disobeys the priest, he's ruined."

"But can't you appeal to the Bishop of the diocese?"

"And who'll the Bishop believe, sir, the parish priest or a schoolmaster who's in disgrace?"

"And that's the government of the schools in Ireland?"

"Yes, sir. I'm told that the Protestants form committees of management of their own accord, but in Catholic schools the priest is absolute master."

"But couldn't you appeal to the Education Department?"

"What's the use of that? One or two have done it, but

what has happened ? They have been ruined for life. The clergy have a thousand ways by which they could ruin us. I don't say but that in most cases the priests treat school teachers fairly ; but there you are, sir, they have absolute power."

" So the alternative is that you either do what Father Meharry tells you, or be ruined for life ? "

" That's it, sir ? "

" But couldn't you get an appointment in a Protestant school ? "

" I'm a Catholic, sir, and no Protestant clergyman or committee would ever think of appointing a Catholic. Besides, we shouldn't be allowed."

Denis thought he had a rough idea of Irish government, but these facts utterly confounded him.

" You see, sir, the education of Catholic Ireland is just managed by the Church, and the English Government not only knows it, but agrees with it. All the money for our salaries is paid through the priests. In fact, the Government plays into the hands of the Church. Not only do they completely control our schools, but they control our training colleges. Years ago, Catholics and Protestant teachers were trained in the same college, but the Church would not have it, and so at the dictation of the Church the English Government built five Catholic training colleges out of public money, and these colleges are under the absolute control of the priests. You see, sir, we are in their power, body and soul. If we disobey, we're ruined."

" But why don't the teachers as a body protest ? "

" Protest against the Church ? I'm afraid you don't understand. First, you couldn't get anything like a number to protest ; they dare not. They would say it was sin. Then, second, what would be the good ? The Church would crush us. The Church laughs at Dublin Castle, how much more would it laugh at us ? You see, sir, it is all-powerful."

" But the English Government ? "

" What English Government dares go against the Church ? Do you remember the Irish Councils Bill, sir ? A Bill was brought before Parliament, with the consent of the Irish members, which meant a certain amount of popular control for Irish schools. But when it was brought before con-

vention the Church killed it. You see, sir, the Church is everywhere ; it has its agents everywhere ; and it controls everything. That's why we are powerless."

" But I'm not afraid of the priests or the Church," cried Denis, his eyes ablaze. " I'll inquire into your brother-in-law's case, and if things are as you say, I'll see that it's brought before Parliament."

" Excuse me, sir, but that would be no use. Scores of cases have been brought before Parliament, and nothing has been done. The fact that my brother-in-law has had police protection for a long time shows that the Government authorities know about it ; but what has been done ? Nothing ; absolutely nothing."

" Then why have you told me this ? "

" I don't know, sir. I suppose I'm like a drowning man, anxious to catch hold of any straw. Besides, it does me good to tell you. Perhaps you could think of something to help me."

" I will help you," cried Denis. " I don't know yet how I can do it ; but I will help you. I'll think the whole matter out—and— By the way, would you have any objection to my speaking to Sir Charles Tyrone ? "

" No good, sir, no good. Protestants dare not interfere in the affairs of Catholics. It only ends in mischief. Besides, Catholics do not like Sir Charles. The priests hate him, sir, and he hates them."

" Well, sleep in peace, Mahoney. I'll do nothing that shall hurt you ; but I'll go into the matter thoroughly."

" For God's sake, do nothing rash, sir. If you do, it'll only mean misery for yourself without helping me. Perhaps, after all, I ought not to have spoken to you. The easiest thing for me is just to do as I'm told."

" But, man, you couldn't—you couldn't ! "

" Anyhow, don't let Father Mehaberry know I've been to you. Whatever you do, don't let it be known to Father Mehaberry that I've spoken to you about it. You won't, will you ? "

" Certainly not."

" Thank you, sir. I feel happier in spite of myself. It has helped me just to tell my story. Good-night, sir."

Denis silently accompanied the man out of the house, and then came back and sat for a long time thinking. The

day had revealed to him more than he thought possible. The more he thought of the whole situation the more he realised that to help this man would be to oppose the Church, and to oppose the Church was like a madman trying to batter down a stone wall by throwing himself against it. He understood now why Irish landlords appoint agents to manage their estates, and live elsewhere themselves.

But he would not leave Ireland, and he would help this man. How, he did not know ; but he would. He little realised what he was doing. He did not dream that he was liberating forces that would scatter preconceived notions to the winds, and destroy his fondest hopes. But Denis was a Celt, both on his father's side and his mother's. And he was only a boy ; he had but little changed at heart since the time when he challenged the butcher's son to fight him because he treated a small boy unfairly, and when he defied the schoolmaster because he had issued an unjust command.

The day was destined to have a marked effect on his career, and clouds which threatened to overshadow his life were rising in the horizon.

## CHAPTER XV

### DENIS AND LENORE

THE next evening the *Connella Signal* appeared, containing a lengthy report, not only of the festive gathering at the Castle, but of the speeches of both Father Meharry and Denis. It was handed to the young man about six o'clock, who after having hastily scanned it began to dress for dinner. He had promised to dine with Sir Charles Tyrone that night, and was anxious not to be late.

Through the day he had been busy. He had ridden to Ballanhessey, and interviewed James O'Neill, Mahoney's brother-in-law, and had obtained the full facts concerning the case. He had not compromised the schoolmaster in any way, but he had thought a great deal how he could help him. He determined, in spite of what Mahoney had said, to gather from Sir Charles whether it was possible to successfully fight against a man like Father Meharry. Of course he would keep faith with his nocturnal visitor, but he felt sure that he had overstated the power of the priest, and that Sir Charles could tell him how matters stood. But more than that, he was eager to see Lenore again. He was greatly disappointed that she had not come to the Castle on the previous day, and his heart was sore. He had not seen Lenore for nearly three weeks, as she had been away on a visit, and had returned only three days previously. As a consequence it was with more than ordinary eagerness that he looked forward to his visit to Clonnell. He fondly hoped that he would not only be able to have a chat with Sir Charles, but perhaps snatch a few minutes alone with Lenore. Indeed, if the truth must be told, he had made up his mind to declare his love at the first opportunity. He was madly jealous of Rosscommon, and felt that his mind would never be at rest until he knew his fate. It is true

he had seen Lenore only a few times since he had come to Ireland to live, but that seemed a matter of no importance. He had known her for years ; she had been in his mind, night and day, ever since their first meeting on the broad bosom of the Fal when he, with all a boy's ardour, felt that he would go through fire and water in order to win a smile from her.

Sir Charles and Lady Tyrone greeted him heartily, but he thought Lenore seemed reserved and cold. He could not help thinking, moreover, that she looked rather pale and ill ; still, although she spoke but little, she did not receive him unkindly, and after he had been in the house a few minutes she seemed more at ease.

"I have just been reading the *Connella Signal*, Kildare," said Sir Charles, after they had been seated at the dinner table a few minutes.

"It was just splendid," cried Lenore. "How angry Father Mehaberry must have been!"

"Yes, he was," replied Denis. "Of course I thought what I said was very harmless, but he did not think so. Indeed, he appeared to regard it as an open declaration of war."

"Of course he did," said Sir Charles ; "and to be quite frank, my dear Kildare, I am sorry you made the speech. Mind you, I agree with every word you said, and in a sense it was just what ought to be said, but it is no use kicking against the pricks. Indeed, as you know, I disagreed with your getting the people there in the way you did. I knew when you told me that you had invited the priest and his curate that trouble would follow."

"Trouble ?" queried the young man.

"Yes, trouble ; for it will mean trouble. I have not lived in this district all my life for nothing. You can't treat the Irish as you can treat the English ; and besides that, I was sure Mehaberry would use the occasion to advance his own schemes. Of course he is very bitter that you've never been to the Roman Catholic chapel, as the Kildares always have from time immemorial ; and although no open rupture has taken place, he naturally cannot forgive you for being unfaithful to the religion of your fathers. You noticed how he said in his speech that he had made you a Catholic, and all that. You answered him very cleverly, and took the wind out of his sails. That would

anger him all the more. As for the rest of the things you said, he would look upon them as an open declaration of war."

"Well," cried Denis, "I determined when I came that I would keep quiet concerning all religious discussion, but if what I said be taken as a declaration of war I shall stand by my guns."

"Then you'll not stay long in Ireland."

Denis's eyes flashed, and his square jaw became set and grim.

"Time will show," he replied.

"Yes, time will show that I am right. Mind, the people themselves have no ill-feeling against you. Indeed, if they were left to themselves there isn't a kinder-hearted people in the world than the Irish peasantry. They are thriftless, they are addicted to whisky, they are ignorant, they are priest-ridden, and as a consequence in a pitiable condition, but they are not a persecuting people by nature. But when you directly, or indirectly, do anything or say anything that will mean lessening the power of the Church, you have the priests around your ears like a swarm of wasps."

"Then we must pull out their stings."

Sir Charles smiled. "My dear fellow," he said, "do you suppose that hundreds of people have not said that during the last fifty years; and has any man or any body of men been strong enough to fight the Church? The strongest antagonist that they ever had was Parnell. Oh, I see you smile. I hated Parnell's politics; hated them. But no one can deny that he was a strong man. His influence in Ireland was wonderful, and the hierarchy began to fear him. He had a great advantage over them too, because he voiced the sentiments of the great mass of the people. But the Church crushed him."

"I thought," replied Denis, "that Parnell's downfall was owing to something entirely different."

"Yes, yes, I know. But talk to anyone who knows the inside of the ghastly story, and you will quickly learn that the final issue was between Parnell and the Church. It was considered entirely apart from morality. Parnell was not a priests' man, and would not play into their hands. That was why he was crushed. In fact, it has been the

same ever since I can remember : no man has been strong enough to fight the Church. Whether your cause is right or wrong does not count, the moment you oppose the Church you are ruined. And three-fourths of Ireland is ruled by the Church."

" Is there no hope, then ? "

" I really see none. Under the fostering care of England Ireland may grow more prosperous. Chronic poverty may be alleviated, but three-fourths of the people will for ever remain under priest rule, the slaves of the priests' will. If Home Rule were granted, Protestants would not be able to live here, because the Government would be used by the priests simply as a means to carry out their will."

" But you say they do that already. You say that the priest rule is supreme."

" Did I say that ? Then I must qualify. While we are under English Government we have a limited priest rule. I'll admit that they have their own way in nearly everything, but there are certain boundary lines beyond which they dare not go. Under Home Rule it would be priest rule unlimited."

" Then there is no hope ? "

" Not unless you can break the priests' power."

" But that seems impossible."

" Yes, because three-fourths of the people are the slaves of the priestly system. No ; all we can do is to fight for the maintenance of the existing order of things. It is our only salvation."

" But it is not salvation."

" It is all we can hope for. The truth is, my dear fellow, I can see no chance for Ireland. We have Rome Rule, and there is an end of it."

" Of course you know the Irish system of education ? "

" Certainly. It is as bad as it can be, or very nearly. But it can't be altered ; the priests will not allow it. They control the schools, paid for by public money ; they control the training colleges—at least a large part of them—paid for by public money ; they control Maynooth College, also supported by huge sums of public money. They rule. You can't alter this, because they are backed up by the great majority of the people."

"Then what is the use of the English Government? Why not give them Home Rule?"

"They control three-fourths of the country now. Give Ireland Home Rule, and they'd control the whole of it."

"And meanwhile these millions of Romanists remain—what they are?"

"Exactly. Take my advice, my boy. Don't oppose the Irish priests. If you do you are lost. They are stronger than Dublin Castle, for they are the dictators to three-fourths of the people. Our policy as Protestants is to leave them alone. They go their way, and we go ours."

"But if a case of injustice crops up, one must fight for the right!"

"Not if the priests are on the other side. You will do more harm than good."

"But look here," cried Denis. "Suppose you knew a man, a Roman Catholic, against whom the priest had a spite, and robbed him not only of his position, his bread, but of his good name. Suppose, too, you knew the man was blameless, would you do nothing for him?"

"No."

"But—but——"

"You would not only bring trouble upon yourself by interfering, but you would make it worse for the man. My dear boy, I've lived all my life in Ireland, and I know. It is no use fighting impossible battles."

"What progress the world has made, has been made through fighting impossible battles," cried Denis.

Sir Charles laughed. "Don Quixote did very little for himself or anyone else by tilting against windmills," he said. "Now, Kildare, I am quite sure you think I am mistaken. You think Ireland can be reformed. It can't be reformed while the priest rules; and it's the worst possible policy to attempt to fight one of them. That's why I'm sorry you are getting at cross purposes with Mehaberry. My advice is to leave him severely alone. You've wounded him deeply by not going to the church of your fathers; don't deepen the wound. Don't oppose him. Don't say anything that would seem to lessen his influence. He's stronger than you are, and he'll crush you."

"How can he harm me?"

"Are you not a landlord? Can't he turn every tenant

on your estate against you? Can't he make the management of your estate an impossibility? Can't he do a hundred things I'd rather not mention? Study the history of Ireland for the last fifty years, and you'd know how he can harm you."

It will be seen that Denis got very little comfort from Sir Charles. Indeed, the older man made him feel that perhaps, after all, his fond fancies were so much foolishness. He had watched Lenore during the conversation, however, and came to the conclusion that she sympathised with him.

Presently Sir Charles was called out of the room, and as Lady Tyrone had fallen asleep over a novel, he found himself practically alone with the woman he loved.

"I don't think I agree with father," she said.

"No?" he replied. "I'm glad of that. I'd awfully like to do something. You see, even although I've been here only a few weeks, I've seen tyranny, and injustice. And then the people are like children. Yesterday at the Castle Father Meharry ordered the people around as though——"

"Yes, yes, I know," interrupted the girl. "You must free the people's minds, their souls, before you can have a free Ireland. Oh, I wish I were a man!"

"What would you do?"

"I'd fight against this slavery. I'd make it my life's work to set the people free. I'd work to make the people independent, and if need be snap their fingers in the priests' face."

"Acts of Parliament can't free the minds of the people. Come, tell me how you'd do it."

The girl was silent.

"I wish you'd help me," said the young man fervently. "What you say is absolutely true. The Irish peasant is a child, he's in the leading-strings of the Church. He daren't think his own thoughts, or live his own life. That's why the whole nation is in poverty, in chaos. You know Ireland well: will you help me?"

Lenore was still silent. She did not seem to know what to say. "I wonder what keeps father so long?" she stammered presently.

Denis went to the window, and looked out. "It's a

glorious night," he said. "Won't you"—he looked at Lady Tyrone, who with her book before her, dozed peacefully—"won't you come out? There is something I want to say to you."

"I thought you were going to have a game of billiards with father," she said, and Denis thought her voice was husky.

"It's of no importance," said Denis; "that is, we can soon be back, and I want to speak to you alone."

The two went out into the hall, and the girl threw a thin shawl over her shoulders. The hall door was open, and they went out noiselessly. The girl shivered as though she were cold.

"Let me fetch you something warmer," he cried.

"No, no, I am quite warm. What is it you wish—that is—what a glorious night it is."

It was indeed a perfect night. The time was mid-summer, and darkness seemed impossible. The wind was sighing among the trees, but no other sound was heard.

They moved across the velvety lawn until they were within the shade of an acacia tree, whose flowers hung in rich profusion all around them. The night was a miracle of beauty.

"One would never think on a night like this, that the history of Ireland had been a history of tyranny, and persecution, and superstition, and injustice, and cruelty, and that its story had been written in blood, would they?" said the girl, and she shivered again. She spoke rapidly, nervously, as though she were afraid.

"I'm sure you are cold," said Denis; "let me go in and fetch a warm wrap for you."

"No, no; I must go in; father will wonder what has become of us."

"But not yet. I want to tell you something."

She was silent, and Denis would have heard her heart beating, had not his own been leaping so wildly.

"What I have to say to you, that is—oh, I love you!" he cried.

He felt the girl at his side start, and she took a step away from him.

"You are not angry, are you?" he said. "I cannot

help it. I know it now, although I did not realise it then ; but I have loved you ever since the day I saw you on the river between Malpas and Truro. I have never ceased to love you. No other love save my love for you has ever entered my heart."

"No, no," cried the girl, "you don't mean that. You must not say it, you must not indeed. It would be wrong."

"It's not wrong ; it's the holiest thing in my life."

He caught her hand as he spoke. She struggled a little to draw it away from him, and then let it remain in his own broad palm ; but it seemed to him that it was cold and lifeless.

"That man Rosscommon must be nothing to you," went on Denis imperiously, for now that he had begun to speak his words came freely, and he felt, in the ardour of his youth, that he would rather die than lose her. "Your mother told me about him. You are not pledged to him, and—and you must not love him. You must not, I tell you."

The girl snatched her hand away from him.

"How dare you !" she gasped.

"I dare, because my whole life's happiness is at stake," he went on. He had forgotten where he was now, forgotten his surroundings, forgotten everything save that he stood by the side of the girl he had loved since early boyhood, and that he was determined to win her. "Don't you know ?—you must know. You are everything to me. I love you, love you. And that man is nothing to you—nothing."

She did not seem to be listening to him. There was a far-away look in her eye, as though she saw something he could not see.

"I've never ceased to think of you night or day," he went on. "I've followed you in my dreams. I have seen your hand beckoning to me through dark woods and rocky ravines. I followed you to the kingdoms down under the sea."

"But there was always something between us." She might have been speaking to herself ; her eyes were as the eyes of those who walk in their sleep.

"Always, always," she went on. "Either a dark shadow, or a grim presence. Never once did you reach me."

Denis felt as though his blood had turned cold.

" You have dreamt the same dreams," he cried. " Our lives are linked together, don't you see ? Oh, Lenore, I love you, love you."

" Stop, stop ! " she cried ; " let me think."

She was utterly different now from what he had ever seen her before. She no longer suggested a somewhat cold and unfeeling nature. Deep had called unto deep, possibilities long lying dormant had sprung into being.

" I cannot wait," said the young man impetuously ; " you are everything to me. But for your influence in the past my life would have been besmirched ; I should not have dared to speak to you now."

" What do you mean ? " she asked.

" You remember that night when we first met here," he said. " I told you I had met you four times, and you asked me to describe the meetings. I told you of three of them, but I could not tell you of the fourth. Shall I tell you now ? "

The girl did not reply, save by looking at him with wide-open, questioning eyes.

" It was in Oxford," he went on. " Perhaps you don't know the temptations which beset young men there ; it is well you should not. I had been working hard, and felt lonely, depressed. I wanted change, excitement. It was one of those times when a fellow is an easy prey to the devil. Some fellows came to my rooms and proposed that we should go to a place which I only think of now with shame. Hitherto I had avoided such places, and I weakly protested. At last I consented, and went to my bedroom to change my clothes. It was then the fourth meeting took place. I saw you."

" You—saw—me ! "

Each word was a hoarse, frightened whisper.

" I saw you, as plainly as I see you now in the light of the moon."

" Did I speak ? "

Again she spoke as one would speak whose mind was far away. She might have been trying to recall something.

" No, but you looked at me ; and there was that in your eyes which made what I had thought of doing impossible. Then I knew that you were my guardian angel, and that we

should meet again ; where, I did not know, did not care. You see, I had thought of you ever since I had seen you on the steamboat going from Malpas to Falmouth, and I had been looking for you ever since. I searched for you everywhere. I never went anywhere, but what I was always thinking of you, looking for you. When you were in Oxford at the Martyrs' Memorial, I ran after your motor-car ; people thought I was mad. When I saw you at Euston I had arranged to go to Cornwall, but I went to Dublin instead. I thought you had gone there, and I determined to speak to you. You see, I loved you. But it was the night in my rooms at Oxford that made me sure that our lives were intertwined. You saved me, you kept me from wrong. God sent you. I knew you lived here directly I saw the house. I had not sufficient reason for knowing, but I did. Don't you see, Lenore ? You must not, dare not think of another."

Still the girl looked at him with wide-open eyes, but there was no surprise in them. He might have been telling her what she knew already, but which she had never dared to think could ever be a reality.

"Lenore, I love you," he went on ; "love you. You understand, don't you ? Is it all in vain ? You love me, don't you ?"

"I dare not ; it would be wrong. I have promised to—to—"

"That is nothing," broke in Denis ; "nothing. You have given no promise."

"But I have," cried the girl, "that is—"

"What ? You mean that fellow Rosscommon. Your mother told me he wanted you, but you have promised him nothing."

"I don't know." She was silent for a minute and her eyes had a far-away look. She might have been listening to the murmur of the distant sea, or the rustling of the leaves above their heads. "You see," she went on, "I knew nothing about you. That is, how could I ? And I told him he could speak to me again on my birthday, and he believes that I have promised him. That is why—oh, don't look like that ! "

"But you promised him nothing," gasped Denis ; "don't say you did."

"I hardly know what I said ; but don't you see ? He believes everything will be settled as he wishes on my birthday, and I have never made him think he is wrong."

"But you must tell him."

She shook her head. "I must think," she said ; "I must do what is right. He is an honourable man, and I must not betray his trust."

"But give me some hope," cried Denis.

"How can I ?"

"But you care for me, don't you ? You have thought of me just as I have thought of you since that day on the Fal?"

"I must not tell you ; it would be wrong." She scarcely knew what she was saying, or realised the purport of her words. Denis, however, with fond ardour caught her hands again.

"You do love me," he cried, "and nothing shall keep us apart."

"No, no. You really must not say that. You must go away."

"Do you mean," he cried, "that you do not wish to see me any more ?"

For answer her hands closed tightly on his, while every nerve in the young man's body tingled with joy.

"You are mine, Lenore," he cried with a laugh ; "mine for ever !"

"But I promise nothing," she said weakly ; "I dare not. Stephen believes I am promised to him. You must wait—that is, until my birthday ; then, perhaps——"

"Yes, I will wait," he cried ; "all is well. You love me, Lenore ; you cannot look at me and say you don't. There now, try. Straight in the eyes."

The girl looked at him, and in a moment they were in each other's arms.

"My Lenore," he cried with all a boy's rhapsody, "I will go and speak to your father at once."

"No, no," and she broke away from him. "Not a word, not a word. I promise nothing, nothing. I am free, and you are free—till my birthday. If—if—but no, I promise nothing. Let us go back to the house."

An hour later Sir Charles was in great spirits. For the first time he had beaten Denis at billiards.

"I told you I was off my game the other times we played,"

he cried ; " you must come over again soon and have your revenge. I think you were not quite up to form to-night."

" It was not that," replied Denis ; " you were playing especially well. But I must be getting back now ; it is already late."

" Nonsense, it is quite early yet ; quite early. Let us join the ladies."

They found Lady Tyrone still nodding over her novel, while Lenore was sitting at the window looking out into the night.

" Lenore, you look rather pale," said Sir Charles anxiously. " What is the matter with you ? "

" I am all right," replied the girl, but Denis could see that her thoughts were far away.

" By the way," went on Sir Charles, " I should not be at all surprised if we do not have an election in the Connella Division at once. I hear that Geary is sinking fast. You will have to work very hard for Stephen. I'd give a great deal to see him returned ; it would be such a blow to the Home Rulers. It would show that even in a Nationalist division they are not safe."

" But do you really think there's a chance, dad ? "

" I do, indeed," replied the baronet. " The split among the Nationalists is our opportunity. Our only fear is that someone shall come and unite them."

" I should hate the man who did," she cried with flashing eye.

" You will have to help us, Kildare," said Sir Charles. " I'd give a great deal to see Rosscommon in. Indeed, all of us are building a great deal on his winning a seat from the Nationalists, aren't we, Lenore ? " and he looked at his daughter meaningfully.

The girl blushed, and then turned pale ; and as Denis watched her, he became madly jealous.

" Who knows ? I may turn Home Ruler—and fight on that side," he said with an uneasy laugh.

" Of course you are not serious," said Sir Charles.

" And if I were ? "

" I won't consider it," said the baronet. " A gentleman, and a Protestant gentleman, who could do that would be—— But there, of course you are joking."

As for Lenore, she seemed to forget all that had passed

between them earlier in the evening. "If you were to do that I would never speak to you again," she said, and her voice was hard and bitter, although her father seemed to regard her words as a joke.

"We won't go to such lengths as that," he said with a laugh; "still, we should find it hard to forgive him, shouldn't we?"

"I should never forgive him," she said; and then for some unaccountable reason she left the room.

"Of course Lenore builds a great deal on Rosscommon's return," said the baronet when she had gone. "In a way, it's natural. You see he and Lenore are—that is, they've known each other ever since she was a child."

Denis rode back to Kildare Castle in no enviable frame of mind. He felt sure that Lenore loved him, and yet he was madly jealous of Rosscommon. He remembered what Lenore had said about Rosscommon believing that she was promised to him, and as he remembered his sky became very black.

"I expect it was because she was excited, and scarcely knew what she was saying," he reflected presently; and he tried to comfort himself with that thought until he reached his own house.

A letter lay on the library table which had not come through the post. When he looked at the signature, a curious feeling crept into his heart.

"What can old Pat O'Hara want with me?" he thought, and then he read the letter eagerly.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DARK-EYED ROSALEEN

THIS was what he read :

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ I read the *Connella Signal* this afternoon with more pleasure than I can say. It is a great joy to me to think that at last someone has come into the district who dares to speak the truth. Of course I am referring to the speech you made in answer to Meharry. But it is not of that I wished to write. Directly after I had read it, the man O’Neill called to see me, and told me of your visit, and what you had said. I think it is possible to render help to all parties concerned. Will you come and see me? I am an old man, and troubled somewhat with rheumatics, or I would have come to you instead. But I want to have a chat with you. I think we may have a great deal in common, and it may be I could let light shine on certain things which are dark to you. Of course your paying a visit to me will arouse the ire of your Protestant neighbours, but if you are the man I take you to be, you will not trouble about that. Still, I may be mistaken in my man, in which case you will not come. I finish my evening meal at seven, and after that until ten I am at liberty. To-morrow night would be quite convenient.

“ Yours faithfully,

“ PATRICK O’HARA.”

The epistle was somewhat defiant in its nature, and yet it evinced a desire to be friendly. The short, abrupt sentences appealed to Denis; there was pride in every line.

He noticed that the signature was not written by the same hand as the letter itself. Evidently Pat had used a secretary. Denis examined the writing closely. It was

in a bold masculine hand, and yet he felt sure it was written by a woman. Of course the old man had dictated it to his granddaughter, and the fact seemed to add a new interest. He pictured the dark Rosaleen writing at her grandfather's dictation.

"Of course I shall go," he said to himself. "I have nothing to do to-morrow night, and I will ride over. It is lucky he should have written just now, too. Sir Charles cannot, or will not, help me with the schoolmaster, and if what people say about old Pat is true, he can."

He read the letter again and noted the bold clear characters in which it was written. "She must be a girl of character," he reflected; "no weak woman could have written that. As for the way the old man writes his name, it suggests the kind of man I've heard he is."

But neither the old Irishman nor the dark Rosaleen held his attention for long. His mind flew back to the hour he had spent alone with Lenore, and to her strange behaviour. He wondered whether the young Irishman had claims on her, other than those he knew; and whether in spite of everything she cared for him.

The next evening he had an early meal and started for Rathsheen, old Pat O'Hara's house. If the truth must be told too, the visit strangely excited him. Why it should be so, he could not think; there seemed nothing important, or out of the common in visiting the old Irishman; nevertheless he felt that every nerve in his body tingled as he drew near the house. He had more than once been tempted to ride over and see the dwelling-place of this, the last member of the long line of O'Haras, but something had always prevented him from doing so. He knew the direction in which it lay, however, and had no difficulty in finding his way.

There was something almost noble in the entrance. Evidently the great stone archway had stood there for many hundreds of years; and although no one lived at the tumble-down lodge, and the drive was grass-grown and uncared for, it spoke of a glorious past. Huge trees, hundreds of years old, bordered the way and threw dark weird shadows, while the tangle of undergrowth suggested an African jungle rather than a British residence.

Denis rode up the drive with a fast-beating heart, and

presently, when the house burst upon his view, he almost gave a gasp. It was in the main only a heap of ruins. One wing of the building had no roof whatever, and the grim, skeleton-like walls looked drear and forbidding. The entrance, with its great porch, looked in good condition, however, and there was a patch of garden which was not only beautiful, but well cared for. There was a fine stretch of lawn too, closely shaven and perfectly smooth, which somewhat relieved the forbidding nature of the ruins.

As Denis came up a couple of dogs rushed towards him with angry growls, but a second later he heard a voice calling them, whereupon they immediately left him.

Old Pat O'Hara came to the porch as he dismounted.

"Thank you for coming, Mr. Kildare," said the old man. "It is very good of you to discard conventions, and take pity on an old man. There should be a man around here somewhere to take your horse. Ah, Tim, take Mr. Kildare's horse and stable him. Will you come this way, sir."

There was something stately in the old man's demeanour. He was clad in rough Irish homespun, and his long white hair and beard hung in tangled masses, but no one could help taking him for a gentleman. His giant form too was imposing, and although he limped in his walk he held himself as erect as though he were a young man.

The room which they entered was of noble proportions, but no decorator's hands had touched it for long years. The ceilings were dirty, while the great oak beams were as black as ink. There were several portraits hung on the walls, evidently of the O'Haras long since dead and gone. On a heavy sideboard stood massive pieces of silver. They suggested the glory of past days.

But Denis paid very little attention to the room: his eyes were drawn as if by a magnet to the young girl who stood near the fireplace. The evening sun shone in at one of the windows, and shed a bright ray of light upon her face and figure. Of course this was the dark Rosaleen of whom he had so often heard, and of whom he had caught a passing glimpse the day after his arrival.

"This is my granddaughter, Mr. Kildare," said the old man. "She is all I have left to me now."

"It is a great pleasure to meet you, Miss O'Hara," cried

Denis, coming forward with outstretched hand. He tried to think of something more to say, but the words would not come. The girl's beauty seemed to make speech impossible. For Rosaleen O'Hara was like no one he had ever seen before. What he had heard about her was true : she looked like a queen. Clad in simple homespun, possessing no ornaments or other adventitious aids to beauty, he knew that she would be noticed in any crowd. She was only a little above the medium height, and yet her figure looked commanding. Perhaps it was because of the poise of her head, the perfect proportions of her body. Or it might have been because of the lustre of her eyes—great, wild, flashing eyes, which told of infinite things. She seemed not only to look at him, but through him, as though she read his soul. There was a wondrous charm in those great dark orbs—wondrous because they seemed to see so much, and because they suggested untold longings, and a wild, passionate nature.

She was very young ; scarcely twenty ; and yet no one would think of treating her as a child. Neither would any man, however bold, dare to take a liberty with her, either by word or look. Rosaleen was a child of the solitude ; nature had wrapped her in her great mother-arms, and given her a dignity unknown to the society girl. She knew but little of the ways of the world, and yet there was nothing gauche, nothing awkward in her movements. She walked across the great apartment to meet Denis, and the young man noticed how lissom was her form, how graceful her movements.

"I am glad you have come," she said. "I have been wondering ever since grandfather asked me to write the letter whether you would, and I should have been disappointed if you had not."

There was a slight suggestion of the Irish brogue in her words ; not enough to be unpleasant, but that soft sounding of the words which suggests the Emerald Isle.

"And I have been looking forward to coming ever since I received the letter," cried Denis.

"Then you are not afraid of what your Protestant neighbours will say ?" laughed the old man.

"Afraid !" cried Denis. "Why should I be ? Surely one can visit a neighbour."

"Oh, but I know what they think of me. I am looked upon as a rebel, as an advocate of—of—everything that's bad. Whenever there's trouble on foot, whenever there has been cattle-lifting, moonlighting, boycotting, or lawlessness of any sort, the fault is always traced to me; but of course you have heard about it. Oh, don't be afraid to confess it. I have been used to it so long, that I expect nothing else. But we're glad you've come, aren't we, Rosaleen?"

"Indeed and we are," cried the girl. "For you're Irish, and you love Ireland."

"The people around my house speak of me as English," replied Denis.

"Ah, but you are not," cried the girl. "You have the Irish eyes, you have the Irish look. You have had the bad fortune to be reared in England, but it's Irish you are. And you love Ireland too. Directly I read your speech in the *Connella Signal*, I felt that we should be friends; that is why I persuaded granddad to let me write you."

"There now, Rosaleen," laughed old Pat. "Ye've let the cat out of the bag now. Mr. Kildare will think I needed a lot of persuading."

"And how could that be, when you've been hoping all along that Mr. Kildare might be a man you could put some trust in?" cried the girl. "Didn't you say the first day he came that you were afraid he'd either be a tool of the priests, or else be led away by the Protestants and play into the hands of those who care nothing for Ireland? And didn't you shout for joy when you read his speech, and say you believed he was a man after your own heart?"

"And if I did," said old Pat, "surely you shouldn't have let Mr. Kildare know."

"And why not?" cried Rosaleen. "Sure Mr. Kildare will be glad to know you think well of him."

She spoke with all the artlessness of a child, and yet the young man felt the strong passionate woman behind the child's words.

"It is a great joy to know that Mr. O'Hara thinks well of me," cried Denis; "it will make my life at Kildare Castle all the happier."

"Granddad will think well of you if you love Ireland,

and will work for her freedom," cried the girl. "Poor old Ireland! She has been oppressed by England for hundreds of years, until hope has nearly gone out of our hearts; and now, when there's a chance for us, our enemies are working might and main against us. That's why I'm so glad you're going to be our friend."

She spoke with assurance. Evidently she had no doubt whatever about Denis enlisting himself on the side she had espoused.

"I hope you will not be led away by any false impression," he said uneasily. "You must not think I believe in Home Rule for Ireland. I am afraid I don't."

"Sure then you are an enemy to Ireland," she cried with flashing eyes.

"On the other hand, I love her more than words can say," he cried eagerly. "I didn't know why it was, but even as a boy I loved her, and was always interested in Irish questions; but would it be friendly to Ireland to place her completely in the power of those who—who—"

He hesitated, and blushed violently. He remembered that he was speaking to Roman Catholics, and he was anxious not to wound their feelings.

"Go on, go on, Mr. Kildare," said old Pat with a laugh.

"I hesitate to do so," said Denis. "Of course my actual experience of Ireland is very limited, and I wish to say nothing that might be thought—well, uncharitable. You see, from one standpoint, I believe in self-government for the country. It is a national sentiment, and it is but natural that the people should resent past treatment. The history of Ireland is sad reading, and I think I realise how you feel. But is Ireland ready for Home Rule? In short, I hate the thought of priest rule, and that, as it seems to me, is what Home Rule would mean. There, I know I've said it badly, but you know what I mean."

Old Pat laughed again. "I like your honesty, Mr. Kildare," he said, "and your opinions are quite natural. In fact, although Rosaleen took it for granted that you would believe in giving Ireland her rights, I quite expected that you would adopt this attitude."

"How can I help it?" cried Denis. "I've been here only a little while, but I've learnt to love the Irish people. Even in the dirtiest and most squalid cabin you find good-humour

and kindness. The people are thrifless and often incapable, but they are lovable. Still, are they ready for self-government?"

"But it is our right?" cried the girl. "By what right, human or divine, should England lord it over us? Why should England tell us what we should have and what we should not have? I know that England conquered us, and since then has oppressed us. She stole our lands, and gave them to Protestants from England and Scotland; she tried to force Catholics to become Protestants. I hate England; I hate her ways, and her proud pretensions. Why should the people of Cornwall, and Devon, and Somerset tell us what is good for us, and graciously say what we shall or shall not have? We are a nation, and as a nation should govern ourselves."

The girl, who had been seated in a high-backed arm-chair, rose as she spoke, and Denis could not help noticing how instinct she was with life, and how perfectly proportioned was her figure.

"I am afraid you are not loyal," laughed Denis.

"God forbid!" cried the girl. "Why should I be loyal? "What claim has England upon the loyalty of true Irish people?"

She walked to the window as she spoke, from which could be seen the ruins which had so impressed Denis when he rode up.

"Look, Mr. Kildare," she cried. "Your people have always been Irish, although you were born and reared in England, and you will understand. Yes, granddad, I *must* speak. The O'Haras have lived in Ireland ever since Ireland was known to be Ireland. They were rulers in the country before the so-called royalty of England was ever heard of. Time was when Rathsheen Castle was the centre of the best life of the country, and when the O'Haras were the protectors and the friends of their dependents for many a mile around. All the land in the county belonged to our people. What happened? The English conquered Ireland; they robbed us of our lands, robbed us of our cattle, our houses, our money; they killed our men, they cruelly and barbarously treated our women, until nothing was left but a few acres of land and a house in ruins. Now, then, why should I be loyal to England?"

The girl spoke like a queen. There was something regal in her manner, and the wild passion which shone from her eyes enhanced her beauty.

For a moment Denis was silenced. She spoke with such vehemence that there seemed nothing to say.

"I think I understand you, Miss O'Hara," he ventured presently. "I daresay if—if I were in your place, I should——"

"Then how can you talk about the rights of England?" cried the girl. "How can you speak as though she had the right to rule us? What is it to her whether we might govern foolishly or wisely? It's not her affair; it's our own. Besides, foolish and ignorant as we are, we could never govern the country worse than she has governed it."

Old Pat listened with a gleam of merriment in his eyes. It was evident that he wellnigh worshipped this beautiful grandchild of his, and sympathised with all she said. As for Denis, he laughed good-humouredly. He was enjoying himself vastly.

"What you say may be true enough," he said, "but haven't we to take things as they are? The fact is, that Ireland is regarded as a part of the British Empire, and she is held with a strong hand. We have to deal with concrete facts, and while your sentiments are natural they don't help matters forward."

"You are no friend to Ireland if you talk like that," cried Rosaleen. "You are just an Englishman after all. I am sorry I asked you to come. No, I'm not," she added hurriedly; "I'm glad you've come; I like you. You've good eyes and an honest face—and—and please forgive me for being rude. There, shake hands with me. Shure, and ye will, won't ye?"

She held out her hand as she spoke, which Denis took with a laugh, noting as he did so, how strong and shapely it was.

"Shure, and I've nothing to forgive," he cried, trying to speak with an Irish accent; "and it's good av ye to speake wid me at all—at all."

"Ah, here comes some coffee," laughed the girl, dashing the back of her hand across her eyes; "and granddad, aren't ye ashamed of yourself not to have offered Mr. Kildare something to smoke?"

There was a charm about Rosaleen which the young man could not resist. She was the spirit of youth and of impulsiveness. She seemed to care no more for conventions than does a young colt galloping in a meadow. She said the thing uppermost in her mind, she acted according to the dictates of her heart. The atmosphere of the room seemed to be charged with the influence of her presence. The young man remembered that her name was the name used for expressing the spirit of young Ireland, while doubtless she was the very embodiment of that spirit.

She talked gaily while they drank their coffee ; then she cut the end of a cigar for her grandfather, and held a match while he lit it. Denis longed to ask her to do the same for him, but was afraid.

A few minutes later someone called and asked to see old Pat, and when they were left alone, she cried : "I must show you the ruins of the old place, Mr. Kildare. When ye get back to your home to-night, just read the story of Castle Rathsheen, the home of the O'Haras ; then you'll understand why I hate England."

The sun was still an hour from setting, but the shadows which the trees threw were long and weird. Denis felt that there was something uncanny in the place as he stepped on the lawn, while the girl walked by his side.

"I'm so glad you've come," she cried ; "life is lonely here sometimes."

" You live here alone with your grandfather ? " queried Denis ; " that is, you've no one of your own age with you ? "

She shook her head. " I should have stayed at school longer," she said ; " but I knew granddad wanted me. I've been here with him for three years now—ever since I was seventeen. I couldn't leave him by himself, could I ? "

" But surely you've friends ? " he said ; " that is, school-girl friends ? "

" Yes, I had," she replied. " Three of them came to see me, but none repeated their visits. The place is too lonesome, and no one comes here. The English have driven the old Irish gentry from the district, and we are alone. My granddad used to see old Mr. Kildare occasionally, but for years we've been alone."

They wandered into the ruins, and Denis almost shuddered at the loneliness of the place. No house was near, and not a sound was to be heard save the sighing of the breeze through the trees.

"It must be horrible in the winter time," reflected the young man. "If I had to live here it would drive me mad."

"And yet Rathsheen was the home of merriment in the old days," said the girl, as if she divined his thoughts. "It was a meeting-place for all the Catholic gentry. There was hunting and feasting of all sorts. But the English robbed us. Of course we fought to the last; but what could we do? The lands owned by the Tyrone's and the Clares all belonged to us, and my people died defending it. They might have kept some of it if they would have given up the old faith, but they wouldn't. How could they? Oh, I forgot. You've forsaken the Catholic religion, haven't you?"

"You've heard what my mother did?" said Denis.

"Yes, I've heard, and granddad says—no, never mind that now. He's a lot to say to you, I know. But do you wonder that I love Ireland, and hate England, Mr. Kildare? Every bit of me is Irish. I've been trained to love Ireland—my motherland, my home. There, look! did you ever see anything so beautiful in England?"

Through an opening in the trees he saw a verdant valley stretching away in the distance. At one end of it a lake nestled, and its waters glinted in the light of the lowering sun. The hills which rose up boldly on each side were covered with giant trees, until they were lost in the glow of the sky.

"It used to be all ours—all, all!" she cried, waving her hand; "but the English robbed it from us, and gave it to a Protestant. Sir Charles Tyrone owns it now; it belongs to one of his farms. If I went there I should be regarded as a trespasser. I, an O'Hara, whose people lived here and owned the land before they were ever heard of. But they can't rob me of the sight of it. I can still glory in its beauty. I can still think of the past."

"Do you know the Tyrone's?" asked Denis.

She shook her head. "I would not," she cried angrily. "I am told they look upon me as a kind of savage. I, who

am an O'Hara. I saw Sir Charles's daughter once, but I did not hate her. I wonder why. And yet I'm told that she hates the thought of Ireland governing herself."

Denis did not speak. He could not help mentally comparing the two girls; rather, he contrasted them. The poles seemed to lie between them.

They continued to wander around the old building, and Rosaleen told him of the glories of the house when the O'Haras were a great people, before they were robbed by the English.

"I know you don't half sympathise with me," she cried when they returned to the habitable part of the house again.

"You can't think how I feel, but I like you all the same, and I am sure we shall be friends. I hope you will come and see granddad often. I can see that he likes you, and I am sure you will like him. He's the noblest man in Ireland. Not that I agree with his politics, that is altogether; but he's the truest friend Ireland has, the most liberal-minded, the most loyal."

"I suppose the priests hate him," suggested Denis.

"Yes, and it makes me sad. I am of the old faith, Mr. Kildare, and I go to confession; but—ah! here comes grand-dad. I'm glad his visitor has gone."

"I suppose Rosaleen has been showing you the ruins," said Pat as they came up. "I wish she did not think so much about them. After all, I have everything I need. If I had all the land my fathers had, I should have more cares, more servants, more worry."

"Yes, but you'd have what's your own," cried the girl, "and you would be able to help the poor, whose condition keeps you awake when you ought to be asleep."

"Never mind that now, Rosa, dear," cried the old man. "I wanted to talk with you about two things, Mr. Kildare. For one thing, I should like to help that schoolmaster and his brother-in-law, and then I want to talk about your future."

They had entered the house again by this time, and Denis looked eagerly towards his host, as if wondering what his last remark meant.

"I thought when I wrote you yesterday," remarked Pat, "that we might be able to help Mahoney; but on consideration I doubt it."

Denis was silent. He did not understand the look in the old man's eyes.

"The fact is," he continued, "I doubt whether Mahoney will allow us to help him."

"Not allow us?"

"I expect by this time he has done what Father Meharry has ordered him to do."

"You have reasons for thinking this?"

"Not in the way you suggest. No, I have heard nothing except what you and O'Neill have told me. But I know him a little, and I don't think he has the strength of mind to hold out. He's just a creature of Meharry's; and if he has not done so already, he will show the white feather."

"Then the fellow is a miserable coward," cried Denis warmly.

"Don't be harsh in your judgments, my lad. He is no worse than most of the others. The truth is, the priests rule the peasantry of Catholic Ireland completely. They can no more disobey in the long run than they can fly. The priests have got the people, and there's an end to it. These poor wretches believe that their temporal and spiritual welfare depend on their priest's good word, and they are afraid to disobey him. I don't think you quite understand our Irish life. The priest comes in the cabin, and takes the child from its infancy. He admits him into the Church, and without the priest the poor little thing can't be admitted. Then, through the child's early years, the priest is the most potent influence in his life. He knows his most secret thoughts through confession, and he dictates his actions. As a consequence, these people look upon the clergy as creatures endowed with God's authority, and surrounded by an atmosphere of sanctity. Then as soon as the child has to go out into the world, the priest's word can bless, or it can damn. Especially is this true in the educational world. The Church has supreme authority there. This has gone on from generation to generation, until we are—well, as we are. And a man like Mahoney dare not oppose the priest for long. He will give in, and that's an end of it."

"And O'Neill?" cried Denis with flashing eyes; "what will become of him?"

"I'm afraid the boycott will continue," replied Pat

sadly. "Dublin Castle is powerless ; the British Government is powerless."

"And the people stand by and never say a word."

"They say a great deal—among themselves. But they dare not do anything. They fear for their bread and their potatoes ; they fear the wrath of the Church. I have seen it again and again ; there may be an outburst of disobedience for a time, but the people end in hugging their chains. They wear their fetters on their souls. That is the curse of Ireland, Mr. Kildare."

"And yet in the face of all this," cried Denis, "you want to give Ireland Home Rule. You would take away the safeguards which England gives, and place the country more completely under the dominion of the priest ?"

The old man's eyes twinkled as he nodded his head.

"You admit, I suppose, that the Church of Rome aims at the complete government of Ireland ?" cried Denis.

"Not the slightest doubt about it," assented Pat.

"You admit that the people do exactly what the priests tell them ?"

"That's true."

"Then I hate Home Rule," cried the young man. "I will fight with all my strength against a system which perpetuates priest rule, and which holds the nation in thraldom. The only hope for Ireland is to fight against priest rule."

Rosaleen started up with flashing eyes as if to answer him, but before she could speak a word her grandfather cried out :

"Here is Friend John Grubb coming. Ah, Friend John, I'm glad to see you."

A minute later a quiet, elderly-looking man came into the room. For a few seconds he looked around the room as if trying to grasp the situation ; then he said with a smile :

"I hope we may meet in heaven, Friend O'Hara."

## CHAPTER XVII

### JOHN GRUBB, QUAKER

"SURE and I hope we *shall* meet in heaven, Friend John Grubb," cried old Patrick O'Hara heartily ; "but meanwhile I want to make old Ireland a little less like the other place. Indeed, that is what we were talking about when you came in. This, John Grubb, is the new squire of Kildare, young Denis Kildare."

"I'm glad to see thee, Friend Denis Kildare," said the new-comer. "I've heard many things concerning thee, and I'm pleased to see thee in the flesh."

"John Grubb is from Connella, Mr. Kildare," said Pat O'Hara. "He's a Quaker, and one of my few friends. It's a wonder, I'm sure, for I'm a fighter, and a firebrand, while he is a man of peace ; but in one thing we are agreed."

"And that ?" asked Denis.

"Nay, I'll not tell you," cried the old man ; "if we see much of each other, as I hope we shall, you'll be sure to find out. Won't you have a cigar, Friend John ?"

"No," replied the other, "I thank you all the same, Patrick ; but I'll keep you company with a pipe if I may."

"Bring some of John's favourite mixture, Rosaleen," cried old Pat, "and the pipe he always smokes when he comes here."

Denis was surprised to see the evident friendliness which existed between the two men, especially when he remembered that O'Hara was the representative of a family which had always been Roman Catholic, while John Grubb, as a Quaker, belonged to a community which was utterly out of sympathy both with Romanist ritual and tradition. Not that he had found any ill-will between Roman Catholic and Protestant, neither was there a suggestion of persecution on either side. Indeed, there was perfect freedom of

intercourse between them on business matters ; but beyond that they were practically strangers. They seldom or never visited each other's houses, and there was a strong line of demarcation between them in all public functions. The few Protestants in the district kept to themselves, scarcely ever meeting Roman Catholics except when business necessitated it. To see this strong Protestant Quaker coming to the house of the representative of an old Roman Catholic family, therefore, and being received as an intimate friend, was something which he never expected. Denis had heard of John Grubb as a large farmer, and a corn-merchant on a large scale : one who by many years of industry had become rich and influential.

" Mr. Kildare was just saying, as you came in, that there was no hope for Ireland until the power of the priest was destroyed," said Pat.

" And he's quite right, quite right," said the Quaker quietly.

" And that as a consequence he hates the thought of Home Rule," continued the old Irishman.

The Quaker lifted his eyebrows.

" I thought when I read his speech in the *Connella Signal* yesterday that he had uttered one of the strongest arguments in favour of that policy," he said quietly.

" I am afraid I do not understand," said Denis.

" Perhaps you were badly reported," said the Quaker ; " but from what I read there, I gathered that you urged the people to think their own thoughts, and fight their own battles. That there would never be any hope for them while they were in leading-strings, and that in order to be strong and independent they must assume responsibility."

" Yes ; what I said might be interpreted that way," replied Denis.

" Ah, then," replied the Quaker, " you have nothing to do but to follow your own words to their logical conclusion."

" You are a Home Ruler, then ? "

" I couldn't be anything else."

" And yet you are a Protestant."

" It is because I am a Protestant, and a very strong Protestant, that I am a Home Ruler. I'll admit that there are not so many Protestants of my way of thinking, but

I hold to my faith most strongly. The Ulster Protestants, for example, are never tired of urging that Home Rule will mean Rome Rule. I, on the other hand, believe that the only thing that will save us from the Rome Rule under which the nation suffers now, is to give the people self-government."

"Isn't yours a curious method of argument?" said Denis.

"Tell me how it is curious," said the Quaker.

"Well, you say that at present we are under Rome Rule. And yet we are under the protection of a Protestant Government. We have a Protestant Lord-Lieutenant—we must by the law of the land; we have a Protestant Chief Secretary for Ireland, and all legislation for Ireland has to be sanctioned by a Parliament which is mainly Protestant. I repeat, you say we have Rome Rule in spite of all this; that the priest is master in spite of Protestant Governments. And then you say that the thing to save us from Rome Rule is to place the country *holus bolus* in the hands of the priest. It seems to me curious logic."

"My dear friend," replied the Quaker quietly, "if you had given as much thought to the question as I have, you would see that the logic, however curious, is sound—quite sound. Years ago I used to think as you do, and my heart was wellnigh broken. It was only when I got light that I began to have hope."

"I am afraid I am very dense," said Denis, "but I do not see the force of your reasoning."

John Grubb smoked quietly for a few seconds, while old Patrick O'Hara watched him with a merry twinkle in his eyes. As for Rosaleen she evidently thought more of Denis Kildare than of the Quaker's arguments. Her eyes were riveted on the young man's face, as though there were nothing else in the world worth looking at.

"Look you, Friend Denis Kildare," said the Quaker presently, "no one can hate priest rule more than I. No, do not mistake me; I am not at enmity with the priests as individuals. As a class they are not bad men, and in the main they live up to their lights, which is more than can be said for many of us Protestants. But the system is horrible. Ireland is killed with priestcraft. The people are in bondage, they daren't think their own thoughts nor live their

own lives ; and while that fact remains you are bound to have an enslaved nation. Do we agree so far ? "

" Yes, we agree so far."

" But under what system of Government does this obtain ? "

" What do you mean ? "

" I mean this : The education of Ireland, which is largely the key to the situation, is in the hands of the priests. The priests govern six thousand schools ; they rule seven thousand teachers. They engage and they discharge the teachers, without let or hindrance. Who granted them this power ? A Protestant Government. It is iniquitous, it is cruel ; but the Protestant Government can't alter it. Why ? The priests, the Church won't allow it. Nearly all the training colleges for teachers are under the control of the priests. Who gave them this control ? A Protestant Government ; yes, and gave them the money to support the schools. If the Government wants to do anything, it has first to get the consent of the Church. If a man wants to get a public appointment he stands but little chance if the priests are against him. As to the Church itself, of course the priests are absolute masters, in spite of the fact that Maynooth College, which exists for the purpose of training priests, is subsidised by the State. Turn which way you will, and you will find that except in one corner of Ulster the priests rule. In short, Ireland is under Rome Rule. You must have seen it for yourself, even during the few weeks you have been here. Financially, politically, mentally, as well as spiritually, the priests rule the people. Again I ask, under what system of government does this obtain ? Under what is called the Union. It is under that system of government which what are called the Unionists desire to uphold. There is no country in the world so much under Rome Rule as Ireland. Do we agree so far ? " and the Quaker looked keenly at the young man, who listened eagerly to his every word.

" Yes, I suppose we do," replied Denis hesitatingly.

" Well, then, suppose we uphold the present system, what hope is there for Ireland ? Under the present system the Irish peasant, instead of becoming more free from the shackles of the priest, has become more enslaved. The priest dictates, and the people obey. They dare not op-

pose the Church ; it would mean their ruin. I tell you in the old days I nearly broke my heart, for I could see no hope for the country I loved. The priest rules, and the priest is the enemy of intellectual and spiritual liberty, which is the first essential to a people's progress. And all this exists under the present system of government."

"And what is your panacea ?" asked the young man.

"Give the people responsibility ; let them govern themselves."

"Which means more complete priest government," cried Denis.

"Ah, that is the crux of the business," cried the Quaker. "You are a student of history, Friend Kildare. Tell me, has it not always been the case that the moment a people have had responsibility and self-government, they have asserted their independence, and begun to work out their own salvation ? Up to a few years ago the Irish people had no responsibility ; politics to them was something a long way off. The vital question for long years has been, shall they govern themselves ? but the actualities of self-government have been unknown. As a consequence the people have had no real interest in what has been done. But give them responsibility, and what will happen then ?"

"The priest will be more than ever master of the situation," cried Denis.

"But for how long ?" asked John Grubb.

"How long ?"

"Yes, how long ? You remember the County Councils Act, and the little power it gave to the people. Well, what has happened ? It has done wonders for the Irish people. Government has been brought near to them ; such an event as the election of a new master to a workhouse has become a burning matter to the people, with the result that many have a more intelligent interest in the affairs of their parishes. I tell you the working of that one Act has convinced me that the larger questions of self-government would go far to breaking the power of the priests, because it would lead the people to think and act for themselves."

"But would they think and act for themselves ?" cried Denis. "Would not the priest be always at them, dictating to them what they should, and what they should not do ?"

"Of course he would ; but how long would he be listened to ? Whatever priestcraft can stand, my friend, it cannot stand inquiry, investigation, light. What would happen if self-government were given to Ireland ? This would happen : There would be what is called a Conservative party, and a Progressive party. Already you can see signs of such being the case. It seems a sort of concomitant of human nature, and no matter what country you go to, the community always divides itself in this way. Each party would have its leader, its newspapers, and its organisations. But those things are only the symbols of the real thing."

"And what is the real thing ? " asked Denis.

"The real thing is that an educational force would be at work ; and what is more, a disintegrating power would be manifest. The people would hear both sides of various questions ; light would be disseminated ; and they would begin to see that the priests are not the only men with light and understanding. But more than this. In nineteen cases out of twenty, the priest, the Church, are not in favour of the aims of the masses, but seek to bolster up old privilege and their old authority. I don't say for the moment which is right or which is wrong, but I do say that such is the case. As a consequence, there would be a clerical and an anti-clerical party, each fighting for the mastery. All that would go to destroying priestly dominance. This has been the case in other countries, and it would be the case in Ireland."

"I see no signs of two parties in Ireland," replied Denis ; "that is, as far as the Roman Catholics go. They are practically Nationalists to a man, and the priests rule the Nationalist party."

"And why ? " asked the Quaker. "It is because there has been but one question in Ireland. 'Give us self-government' is the one cry of the Nationalist party, and all differences have been sunk in that. But let them get it, and a score of other questions will arise and the people will fight like a dog over a bone, in order to advance their own creeds. Of course many wild and foolish things will be done, egregious blunders will be made, and perhaps half of England will hold up its hands in horror, and cry, 'I told you so' ; that is almost inevitable. But the main

thing will be that the people will be fitting themselves for self-government. They will be enlightened, and they will shake off clerical control just as they have in other countries. And there lies the hope of Ireland, my friend."

Denis was silent ; the thought was almost strange to him. He had never considered the question in this light before.

"The truth is," went on John Grubb, "responsibility, freedom, are essential to a people's progress, and that is impossible under the existing state of things. That is why I, being a convinced Protestant, was driven to Home Rule. Here are three millions of people, the great bulk of whom are children, dominated by the priest ; they dare not think for themselves, they are in leading-strings. That is your own figure, Friend Kildare. As a natural consequence, they are incapable, they lack independence of character, and they remain what they are. But give them a chance, give them a chance."

"Assume for the moment that your reasoning is sound," cried Denis, "how long would it take, do you think, for the people to break their bonds and become free?"

"Ah, there I dare not prophesy," replied the Quaker. "Of course it must take time."

"And in the meanwhile the priests would be in power, and the priests mean to rule."

"There can be no doubt about that," said John Grubb. "Whichever way events turn, the Church of Rome means to rule Ireland. But even the Church of Rome can rule only by the will of the people, and year by year the people will be more and more asserting their own judgments."

"Yes, but meanwhile," urged Denis—"meanwhile, you must, as a practical man, think of that. Say it takes ten years to do this, what happens to the Protestants during those ten years ? Have not the leaders of the Roman Church declared again and again that they will never rest till Protestantism, which they regard as a foul heresy, is driven from the land ? What, during those years, will the avowed enemies of Protestantism do ? What liberties, what justice will our co-religionists have ? Excuse me, Mr. O'Hara, I know you are a Roman Catholic, but the truth must be told. I do not say that the people, if left alone, would do anything. On the whole, the spirit

of religious persecution is far removed from them ; but they must obey their priests. What chance would the Protestant minority have against this unlimited Rome Rule ? When have Roman Catholic priests been known to give Protestants justice ? Are not the Ulster people right in their protest ? And how can we who are Protestant, and who as a consequence believe in liberty of conscience, the right of private judgment, and freedom from clerical control, consent to hand over a million people of our faith to the tender mercies of Roman Clericalism ? ”

Old Patrick O'Hara rose from his seat with a laugh. “ I like this,” he said. “ I like this. John Grubb, you have put your side of the argument fairly and well ; but perhaps you cannot deal with this as well as I can. The Protestants, Mr. Kildare, the Protestants, whenever have they been unable to care for themselves ? Yes, if you like, I’m a Roman Catholic. I was reared one, as all my people have been, but as you know the priests hate me. Why ? Because I have fought them, and because I hate superstitious tyranny. I hate the Rome Rule under which we groan ; I hate the complete sway which the priests have ; but who are the people who have prospered ? Go all over this priest-ridden Ireland, and who have the wealth, the position, the influence, the culture ? Always the Protestants ; always. Here we are in the centre of a Roman Catholic district ; only a small proportion of the people are the Protestants ; but who are the prosperous people for twenty, thirty, forty miles around ? Who own the best shops in Waterford, in Cork ? Who employ most labour, who live in the big houses, who own or control the big industries ? Always the Protestants. The Roman Catholics as a body have not persecuted them ; they have not dared ? Why ? Because brains, and force of character, and education are more powerful than numbers. That’s why. Here’s our friend, John Grubb. He came to Connella thirty years ago a poor lad of twenty, and now he’s one of the richest men in the South of Ireland. He’s a magistrate, he holds important positions, and has a great deal of influence. Roman Catholics have remained poor, but John Grubb has become rich—ay, and has become rich through the good-will of his Roman Catholic neighbours, in a Roman Catholic district. Protestants in Ireland are

only a fourth of the population, but they own the bulk of the land and of the wealth of the nation. Here, side by side, are Catholic and Protestant working people ; and in the great majority of cases the Protestants are prosperous, cleanly, contented, and educated, while the Catholics are in poverty. No, no ; we need not fear for the Protestants. They are able to hold their own against the priests, because they are independent, and their independence has made them capable and given them a force of character unknown to the Irish Roman Catholic peasant."

Denis could not help laughing at the old man's vehemence. " You certainly have a high opinion of the Protestants," he said.

" That is one reason why the priests hate me," was his answer. " I hate their authority and assumptions. Catholic as I am, I would like the people to snap their fingers in the priests' faces when they interfere in things outside their spiritual domain. I want a free, independent people. For this I have been fighting and will fight, even though the priests kill me. But fear for the Protestants ! The Protestants have always been able to laugh at the priests, and will continue to be able to do so, no matter what form of government we have."

" But think of that mixed marriage case in Belfast," urged Denis. " Remember, that because of the awful *Ne Temere* decree, a woman has been robbed of her husband, her home, and worse than all, of her children. How can the Protestants fight against a system like that ? "

" I hate all such things," cried old Pat ; " they are hellish. But what do you deduce from it ? That ghastly business all took place under a Protestant Government, and your Lord-Lieutenant and your Irish Chief Secretary either would not, or could not, move hand or foot to find the woman's children. But could the priests do that in Italy, in France, in Portugal ? Give our people the right to govern their own country, and their very manhood would make it impossible. No, no, Mr. Kildare, Catholic as I am, I hate Rome Rule, and it is because I hate it that I want Irish people to govern their own country."

All the time the men were talking Rosaleen sat perfectly still, scarcely ever taking her eyes from Denis's face. She

seemed to be interested in what John Grubb and her father said, not so much because of her interest in their arguments, but because of the way she hoped they would influence the young squire of Kildare. Sometimes her eyes flashed with a strange light, and again her lips trembled. When her grandfather ceased speaking she started up and seized Denis by the arm.

"Can't you see who are the true friends of Ireland?" she cried. "Can't you see that it is such men as granddad who would make us a free people?"

"If the priests thought as he thinks, they would fight Home Rule to the death," said Denis. "If I know anything of them, those who believe in it believe it would give them more power than ever."

"But do you?" asked the girl. "After what granddad and Mr. Grubb have said, can't you see the silliness of the cry that Home Rule would mean Rome Rule?"

Before Denis could reply, John Grubb rose to go. "I'm glad to have seen thee, Friend Kildare," he said, lapsing into his Quaker mode of speech. "If ever thee should be in Connella, and should care to call on a plain man, I shall be glad to see thee."

"I will certainly call," replied the young man; "and I must thank you for putting a side of the question that had not appealed to me before."

"Think it over, think it over, Friend Kildare," replied the Quaker. "I am very sorry we go different roads, or we might have gone back together. Good-night, Friend Patrick; good-night, little maid. I trust we may meet in heaven."

He left the room, using the same form of speech he had used on entering.

"I'll go and see that Tim has your horse safe," cried old Pat. "Mr. Kildare, don't go yet; it wants half an hour to ten o'clock."

He left the room as he spoke, leaving Denis and Rosaleen alone.

"I had a dream, a vision while you were talking," said the girl.

"Tell it me," said Denis with a smile.

"I heard all that was said," was her reply; "every word; but I had a vision all the same. Oh, it must be

grand to be a man, and fight your country's battles. And I had a vision of you fighting the battles of Ireland, Mr. Kildare. I saw you battling to make the Irish people independent and free. I saw you bearing ignominy and insult and persecution, in order to make Ireland a free nation. And I saw—no, I will not tell you that."

"Yes, tell me," cried Denis.

A far-away look came into her eyes, and her lips trembled. "No, I will not tell you," she said. "I must not. But you will be a friend of Ireland? Shure, and ye will now, won't ye?"

There was music in her voice, and in the lamplight she looked surpassingly beautiful. She was the spirit of youth, of impulse, of daring. In spite of himself Denis found his heart beating faster.

"You know now why the priests hate granddad, don't you?" she said.

"I can't think how a Roman Catholic can speak of them as he does," he replied.

"Ah, that is one thing about which I don't always agree with him," and she looked sad; "and yet, as I have seen the priests order around the peasants as though they were children, as I've heard them tell them, in their own houses, what they should and what they should not do, I've wished they would snap their fingers in their faces."

Like lightning his mind flew back to his last meeting with Lenore. She had given expression to nearly the same sentiments; but it seemed as though the poles lay between the two girls.

"And yet," she went on, "the priests are kind, too. Often they are the only friends the poor peasants have. They are the doctor, and the lawyer, and the agent, and the general adviser, in addition to being priest. Perhaps that is what gives them such tremendous power. But it isn't that I'm thinking about so much. I want Ireland to be Ireland. I'm an Irish girl, Mr. Kildare; I'm the last of the O'Haras; that's why I don't want to see my people in subjection to the English. And you *will* help me to fight for ould Oireland, won't ye? Ye are a Kildare, and ye must!"

Denis laughed at the girl's pleading tones, nevertheless the winsomeness of her presence made a strong appeal to him. Yes, Mulligan, the Irish lawyer, had spoken the

truth about her on the first day he had come to his new home. She was wondrously lovely. Never had he met anyone who possessed quite the same kind of beauty. The flash of her great black eyes was like a wizard's charm ; her black hair, shot with red and gold, formed a glorious crown ; her pure girlish face, her wondrous complexion, and her full rosy lips, were the very incarnation of youth and beauty. And yet there was something wild, and almost savage about her. Those eyes which shone with merriment now could gleam with passion ; her every movement suggested that she could be as ungovernable as a young savage.

Denis Kildare felt all this rather than thought it, and yet her beauty fascinated him. She was more than ordinarily intelligent too. He knew nothing of her education, or of the kind of books she loved, but it was impossible to look at her eyes or her shapely forehead without knowing she had a quick, eager mind. In short, Rosaleen O'Hara was a girl in a million, and Denis Kildare did not wonder that everyone spoke of her with enthusiasm.

Not that she made him think less of Lenore, who was still the angel of his dreams. She had appeared to him like a bright vision in the first flush of his youth—a vision he had cherished ever since. Only the night before he had told her that he loved her, and although she had acted strangely, and discouraged, rather than encouraged, his love, he looked forward with great hopes towards her birthday.

All the same, it was pleasant to him to be there in the old home of the O'Haras, pleasant to talk with this beautiful Irish girl. He was only a lad, and his heart was full of the fires of youth, and for the time he seemed to be in an enchanted castle.

"Shure, and ever since the day I saw ye at Mickle-kerry, I have thought of ye," she went on. "Oh, I knew who it was, and in a way I could not explain I hoped that we should be friends."

"I hope we shall be friends," said Denis ; "indeed, we must be. What is there to hinder us ?"

"What should there be ?" she cried with artless simplicity ; "granddad likes you, he who likes so few people, and I know he'll be wanting you to come here often. And I hope you will, Mr. Kildare, for it's lonely I often am. I

haven't a friend who comes to cheer me, and I never go away from here, because granddad will never go, and I cannot leave him alone. But if you will come sometimes, it'll make me as happy as a bird."

She was only a child, and spoke as freely as a child of six or eight might have spoken. She did not know that she was playing with fire in talking to this young fellow, never realised that her young heart would soon learn the secret, not only of life's greatest joys, but also of its greatest pains.

"Ah, here's granddad come back," she cried presently. "What a long time you've been talking to Mr. Grubb. Do you know Mr. Kildare is often coming over to see us, and we are all going to be great friends?"

"That's right," said old Pat O'Hara; "it's very few friends I have, Mr. Kildare. There are no Catholic gentlefolk around here, and of course the Protestants won't speak to me. To them I'm a rebel, because I believe in Irish freedom, and because I hate English thralldom. Not that they think I'm the tool of the priests—no, they cannot do that; all the black-coated gentry hate me too much—but they say I'm not loyal, because I would strike a blow for Irish liberty. But come often, my boy; come often."

"Mr. O'Hara," said Denis, "do you really believe that Protestants would not suffer under Home Rule?"

"They might for a time in the way of representation on public bodies," replied Pat; "but as for anything else, it's nonsense. My dear lad, it's not the well-being of Protestants that we have to think about; they are strong, and rich, and educated, and thus able to take care of themselves; no, the real question is how to save the poor Irish Roman Catholics, to break the chains of their minds, their souls—to set them free. As a namesake of mine has said, '*We want peasant proprietorship in mental freedom; we want self-government for the peasant.*' The Protestants have these things, and hence they are strong and vigorous. And I want to give it to the Catholic peasant. That's the real problem. But there, I'm not going to talk politics any more to night. It's nearly ten o'clock, Mr. Kildare, and although I may seem discourteous, I insist on going to bed at that hour. No, don't go yet, there are a few minutes left. I want Rosaleen to sing to us before you go."

A few seconds later Denis Kildare forgot where he was.

Rosaleen sang an old Irish song, and all the romance of his heart responded to it. He was not quite sure what it was about. It did not matter. He knew he lived in the old days of Irish story. There was music, and mystery, and battle, and love, and hatred. The girl revealed herself to him in a new light as she sang. She lived in the spirit of her song—a song of Ireland's love and glory.

“Avenging and bright falls the swift sword of Erin  
On him whom the brave sons of Ushaa betrayed ;  
For every fond eye that he awakened a tear in,  
A drop from his heart's blood shall weep o'er the grave.”

“Sing again,” he cried when she had finished, forgetting what Pat had said.

“No, no,” cried the old man ; “it's ten o'clock, and your horse is at the door. But come again, my lad. There is much I have to say to you.”

“And do you like my singing ?” cried the girl ; “shure and I'll sing to ye as much as ye like if you will come to hear me.”

A few minutes later Denis rode back to Kildare like a man in a dream.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE COMING OF THE CRISIS

NOTHING of importance had happened during Denis Kildare's visit to Castle Rathsheen, and yet the young man realised that his intellectual standpoint was changed. He looked at things differently. The quiet, searching words of John Grubb the Quaker, as well as the burning sentiments of old Pat O'Hara, put a new complexion on everything. He felt that he had been introduced to a new phase of thought. That which he had feared no longer loomed darkly on his horizon. It had become shadowy, and almost unreal. During his college days he had urged with much warmth that Home Rule would mean Rome Rule, but now everything had changed. He found himself considering the statements of the old Quaker, that Ireland was under Rome Rule now, and that its people were bound body and soul by the priest, and that self-government, home government, was the power that could destroy priestly dominion.

In addition to all this—in the background perhaps, but still there—was the influence of Rosaleen. As his horse trotted along the lonely road between Rathsheen and Kildare Castle, he could still hear her voice bewailing Ireland's sorrows and chanting Ireland's glories. He did not ask himself whether her singing would please a music-master or not, he only knew that it had a wonderful effect on him. The trees which overshadowed the lane, the light of the summer night in the fields, had a new meaning. This girl, who loved Ireland so, made him think of it in a different way. The Emerald Island was no longer a country, it was a spirit ; that spirit was wild, turbulent, hating much even as it loved much ; but a spirit still, telling of infinite things.

"She is a wonderful creature," he said to himself as his

horse came up to his own door, "a wild, ununderstandable sort of creature, but still wonderful. No wonder the people love her so. I can quite imagine how she quelled those wild Irishmen at the meeting Father Meharry told me of. When she could not frighten, she could charm."

A servant took his horse from him, and he stood for a few minutes looking across the grounds. The night was windless. Scarcely a leaf stirred among the trees; the peacefulness of a midsummer night had fallen upon everything, and the moon lit up the scene with its bright silvery light.

"And yet the story of Ireland is written in tumult, in lawlessness, in blood," he reflected. "It is hard to believe it."

He thought of the village which lay at the foot of the hill; he reflected on the squalid dwellings, on the uncouth condition of the people, and of their utter hopelessness and helplessness.

"It seems as though the country has a curse upon it, in spite of its beauty," he said to himself. "I wonder if what those men say is true?"

He entered the house and found his way into the library. In the light of the lamp he saw a letter lying on the table. It had come by the evening post. On opening it he saw that it was from the village schoolmaster, John Mahoney. The signature caused the young man to reproach himself. He had gone to see Pat O'Hara that night almost for the express purpose of devising means whereby he could help this man, and yet he had almost forgotten him. He had dismissed him from his mind as if his case were of no importance. It is true the man's name had been mentioned, but old Pat O'Hara had expressed grave doubts whether it would be possible to help him, because he believed the man would do Father Meharry's bidding. In this he believed the old man was mistaken. No free-born Briton, whether Celt or Saxon, could tamely submit to be bullied into a thing which he knew to be wrong.

This was what he read:

"HONOURED SIR,—

"I write to ask you not to take any further steps in the matter mentioned between us when I called on you.

I cannot face the inevitable consequences of opposing Father Mehaberry. As I told you, my future is in his hands, and if I do not obey him, not only my dismissal from the school is certain but no other situation would be open to me. If I were a single man I might fight the matter out, but it would mean starvation for my wife and children, and that I cannot face. I am afraid you will think of me as a coward, but if you try and realise what I have said, and realise, too, that I am a Catholic, that Father Mehaberry christened me, as well as my wife and children, and also that I have been taught to obey my priest without question all my life, you will sympathise and forgive.

"Apologising for troubling you, and thanking you for the help I am sure you would have given me,

"I am, your obedient servant,

"JOHN MAHONEY."

"P.S. Will you pardon me for urging you not to oppose Father Mehaberry in any way? It will be worse for you if you do, and no good will result from it."

Denis threw down the letter impatiently. "So that is the kind of man he is," he reflected. "Old Pat O'Hara was right."

He read the letter through again, and became more sympathetic. Was Mahoney such a coward after all? There were two things which he had to bear in mind. First, that it was a terrible thing for a man with a young wife and two baby children to face starvation. For that was what John Mahoney's disobedience to his priest would mean. The Catholic Church completely ruled the elementary schools of Ireland, although they were supported by the State. Therefore Mahoney, with between seven and eight thousand other teachers, were completely at the mercy of the priests. It was an iniquitous system, but there it was. It was all very well for him, Denis Kildare, to call Mahoney a coward, but supposing he were placed in similar circumstances? But more than that, he must remember that Mahoney stood in fear of Mehaberry. The priest was his confessor, his spiritual guide. Obedience to the priest was a part of his very life, the fear of the priest had gripped him body and soul, even as it had gripped the great mass of the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

There could be no doubt about it, John Grubb and Pat O'Hara were right. Ireland was under Rome Rule, and it was difficult to see how, under any other form of government, the Church could more completely dominate the destinies of the people.

He laid down the letter with a sigh. A great pity for the schoolmaster entered his heart. The man was not free, the people of Ireland were not free. What was the great liberating force? How could these kind-hearted peasants throw off their chains?

Then, again, political questions sunk in the background, his visit to Rathsheen Castle faded away. The thought of his love came surging back to his heart. His heart ached to see Lenore again. He believed she loved him, and he longed to hear her say so. He could not go and see her the next day, he had an engagement in Cork, but the day following he would surely go to Lenore's home and feast his hungry heart.

Two days later he made his way to Clonnel, his heart all aflame with eagerness to see Lenore. No sooner did he enter the grounds, however, than his heart became as heavy as lead. Walking across the park he saw Stephen Rosscommon and Lenore. Evidently the man was saying something pleasant to her, for she was laughing gaily. Denis reflected that when he had spoken to her last she was sad, and almost despairing, while now her heart was filled with laughter.

He told the coachman to stop, and asked himself whether he should not turn back. He was filled with mad jealousy. Why should Lenore look at this fellow with merriment in her eyes if she did not delight in his presence? What was the use of him, a stranger, thinking he could win her from a man who had seen her constantly from childhood?

A minute later he was driving rapidly towards the house, his teeth set, and with grim determination in his heart. He would not yield an inch. He would not give up the dream, the hope of his life.

Sir Charles Tyrone met him rather coldly, he thought. Not that there was any lack of warmth in his words; but his manner seemed constrained. The baronet had just come downstairs dressed for dinner, and was talking to a man who was a stranger to Denis.

"Ah, Kildare," he said, "I thought you might run over to-night. I should have sent you a line early in the afternoon, but I remembered that you said you would be here if possible. Allow me to introduce you to Sir William Wilkins. Of course you know him by report."

"One could not live in Ireland without knowing Sir William by report," replied Denis, looking at the man's strong and somewhat sardonic-looking face. "Are you planning some campaign to kill Home Rule, Sir William?"

"That's just what I came here to-day for," replied the other. "As you know, there may be an election in the district almost any time, and I came down to arrange for a monster Anti-Home Rule demonstration."

Sir William Wilkins was a wealthy landowner, and one who had taken a prominent part in fighting Parnell years before. He was an effective speaker of the caustic order, and had a great command of vituperative language, which however never went beyond the bounds of Parliamentary decorum. At present he was not in Parliament, but he was, although not the ostensible leader of the Anti-Home Rulers in Ireland, perhaps the most influential man on that side. He was great at organising demonstrations, and no party whip could command more speakers than he.

"I am awfully glad to see you, Mr. Kildare," went on Sir William; "had you not come to-night I had made up my mind to take the liberty of calling on you to-morrow."

"That's very kind of you," replied Denis; "pray don't let my presence here to-night prevent you from carrying out your determination. I shall be delighted to see you at Kildare."

"I shall see how I am fixed," replied Sir William. "The truth is, I expect to be overwhelmed with work for many a long month to come."

Denis was silent.

"It's the political situation, my dear sir. Every man who is loyal to his king and country is called to do battle. Every man who has Irish blood in his veins, and is not willing to hand over his country to a set of rebels, must be up and doing. Sir Charles has been showing me the *Connella Signal*, Mr. Kildare. I was simply delighted at what you said. From what I gather from Sir Charles, the priests look upon you as a traitor to your name."

"I suppose so," replied Denis quietly.

"And the priests rule the greater part of Ireland."

"You are convinced of that?"

"You cannot live in Ireland for any length of time and have your eyes open without seeing it. Study the history of any parish in the West and the South of Ireland, and the fact is writ large. The priest rules; and where the priest rules, ruin follows. A great duty is laid upon us, my dear sir."

"And that?"

"To save the country from Home Rule, which means Rome Rule."

"But you have just said that Ireland is under Rome Rule now."

"I'll put it in another way then. Home Rule would put Ireland more completely under Rome than she is now."

"Then, as I understand it, your object is to keep things as they are."

"I want to save the Union."

"But if you do, according to what you have said, Ireland will still be under Rome Rule; that is, all except our corner of Ulster."

Sir William shrugged his shoulders.

"As far as one can see then," said Denis, "there is no hope for Ireland; and your policy is to fight for what seems to you the lesser of two evils."

"That is rather a rough way of putting it," replied Sir William, "but I am afraid it amounts to that. Of course the County Councils Act and the Land Purchase Act will go on doing good work, and in time Ireland may become more prosperous."

"But as far as the rule of the priests—the Church—goes, that remains?"

"What would you, my dear sir? These black-coated fellows rule the consciences and the wills of the people; three-fourths of our people are under their dominion, and that fact remains, whatever form of government continues."

"Pardon me," cried Denis, "but I am anxious to obtain light on the matter. Ever since I have thought anything about politics at all, I have opposed Home Rule because

I believed it meant Rome Rule ; but now I find there is Rome Rule. As you say, while Rome continues to rule there can be no prosperity, no freedom for the individual ; and thus the problem which it seems to me we have to face is, how we can break the chains by which the people are bound."

" That can never be done," replied the other ; " the real problem is to save the Protestants, the loyalists, from being placed under the heel of the priests. That is the work of every loyal man and woman. Why, sir, think, would you have men like Sir Charles Tyrone here ruled by the rabble in the village ? Will you allow the fellows who glorify the rebels who fought against England in the Boer War to be our masters. Shall we take our orders, our laws, from a cut-throat gang ? "

" But are the Irish people a cut-throat gang ? Aren't they really a kind-hearted people ? "

" A lot of wild, irresponsible, ignorant children, who are the playthings of priests and paid agitators. Left to themselves they would be all right. Unfit to rule of course ; but still, kind-hearted and harmless ; but as tools of their masters they would ruin the country. To give Ireland Home Rule would be like placing a razor in the hands of an unthinking man who was under the control of one who cared for no one's safety and welfare but his own."

" But is nothing to be done for the unthinking man ? "

" Keep the razor from him," was the reply.

Denis looked thoughtful. The answer did not satisfy him. The man was saying what for years he had believed ; but since he had heard old John Grubb speak on the matter, it seemed utterly wrong.

Still he was not convinced, but he said nothing further. Just then Stephen Rosscommon came in with Lenore by his side, and immediately politics lost their interest. Evidently Rosscommon was in high spirits.

" Ah, Sir William," he cried, " I'm so glad you've come. Do you know the Nationalists can't settle upon a man ? They are divided into two camps. Old Pat O'Hara won't support the priests' candidate ; and from what I can hear old Pat can't get any man strong enough to fight on his side. While they are divided there is a chance for us.

As for the present member, his days are numbered. From what I can hear the doctors only give him a few weeks."

"Congratulations, my dear fellow. When rogues fall out honest men get their rights. It would be the greatest blow the Home Rulers ever had if we could snatch a seat from them here in the very heart of a Roman Catholic population. I can fancy the Radicals writhing when the news was announced in the House of Commons. Of course old Pat opposes the priests ? "

"Might and main. His contention is that self-government for Ireland would mean smashing the chains of priestcraft, and he wants to fight the election on those lines. His influence in the South of Ireland is tremendous. Ireland has two great enemies, he says—the rule of the priests and the rule of the English."

Sir William laughed. "We must try and keep the two parties divided," he said; "that is our road to victory."

Dinner was announced, and soon after, Denis, feeling very miserable, found himself seated by a Miss Clare, a very prim-looking spinster of uncertain age. To his great chagrin Lenore was seated next to Rosscommon, some distance away. He wished he had never come to Clonnel that night; his nerves were raw, and his heart was sore. Miss Clare was one of those inconsequent women, who, with a great desire to please, seemed to have a special gift for saying unpleasant things.

"I hear that your fête at Kildare Castle is being much talked about," she said.

"Indeed ? "

"Yes. Of course your motives were very praiseworthy, but you can never do anything towards bridging the chasm."

"What chasm ? "

"The chasm between Unionists and Nationalists; between Protestants and Roman Catholics."

"It seems a pity, doesn't it ? "

"Yes, an awful pity; but when you've lived here longer you'll see that all efforts in that direction are useless. The very dogs feel it. I have a dog who always avoids the dogs owned by a Roman Catholic farmer. It always has been so. You know, Mr. Kildare, I'm a great believer

in Providence, and I maintain that the English were destined by Providence to rule Ireland."

"Up to the present they haven't had much to boast about," replied Denis, almost brusquely.

"Ah, that's because the Irish people haven't known what's good for them. I'm altogether English myself, although I have an Irish name, and I've studied Irish politics closely. These Irish people are not fit to govern. Do you know I've always allowed my cook to have a good deal of power in the kitchen. It worked well while I had English cooks, but when I got an Irish Roman Catholic, it wouldn't work at all. I had actual rioting in the kitchen—actual rioting. From that time I was convinced that Irish people were unfit to rule."

Denis laughed.

"Keep these people in their places, Mr. Kildare; that's my motto. The Protestants always have been top-dog, and we must remain top-dog. Of course you acted for the best in trying to bring the people together, but naturally it failed. How could you expect a man like Sir Charles Tyrone to fraternise with Father Mehaberry and old Pat O'Hara?"

"But I didn't ask Mr. O'Hara."

"Didn't you? And yet I heard you were great friends. Someone was telling me this morning that you visited Rathsheen a day or so ago. You'll have to be careful, Mr. Kildare. You will make a bad impression if you get friendly with such people. Forgive me, won't you, but I'm frightfully plain-spoken. Pat is an awful old man, while Rosaleen is a perfect savage. Did you see her?"

"Yes," replied Denis, almost angrily.

"A terrible creature, I've been told. Beautiful, of course, after the wild Irish kind of beauty, but perfectly impossible. A worse rebel than her grandfather, I suppose. What did you think of her?"

For answer Denis turned to the servant who was bringing round the fish.

"An awful place, Rathsheen," went on Miss Clare, without waiting for Denis to reply. "I suppose the two live like peasants in a cabin. Did the pigs come into the room while you were there? What an awful thing to think of

allowing such people to govern the country! Of course you, with your English training, must feel that?"

Denis was silent.

"I do hope Mr. Rosscommon will be successful, don't you?" went on Miss Clare. "I suppose that dreadful man who is our member now will soon be dead, and then we shall have an election. Do you know," and here she became very confidential, "I suppose a great deal depends on whether he wins the seat or not—a *very* great deal."

"Indeed?"

"Of course we don't talk much about it, but you know what a staunch Unionist our dear Lenore is? Well, if Stephen wins the seat, the engagement—will be settled."

Denis reflected on his last conversation with Lenore, and wondered. His heart was very bitter.

"Lenore has always been ambitious," went on Miss Clare, "and I believe she hopes that Stephen will become a leader of the Irish Unionist party. You mark my words, as surely as he wins the Connella election the engagement will be announced. Indeed, I shouldn't be surprised if everything were settled before."

"Of course it would be a love match?"

He was sorry he had uttered the words as soon as he had spoken, especially as he knew that he spoke bitterly; but he hardly knew what he was saying.

"They have known each other so long," replied Miss Clare, "and of course they are very fond of each other. No one can help seeing that, can they?"

"I can't say I've paid the matter much attention," replied the young man.

Miss Clare was about to continue when Sir Charles broke in upon their conversation.

"I say, Kildare," he said, "Sir William wants you to speak at the demonstration he is arranging. 'You will, won't you?'"

Denis shook his head.

"I'm not clear on the question," he replied.

"Not clear on the question! What do you mean?"

"It is difficult for me to tell you, because my thoughts have taken no clear outline," he replied. "And a chaotic mind is valueless when a definite cause has to be pleaded."

"I thought you were particularly clear when we discussed

the question last time," said Sir Charles. " Surely you would not hand over your fellow Protestants to the tender mercies of the priests, would you ? "

" Is that the question at issue ? " asked Denis.

" It all resolves itself into that. Shall we have priest rule under a Dublin Parliament, or shall we remain under the Imperial Parliament ? There you have the case in a nut-shell."

Denis was silent a few seconds. " I am afraid I could not speak at your meeting," he said presently.

The atmosphere immediately seemed to grow cold. Sir Charles Tyrone coughed and looked uncomfortable. Sir William Wilkins looked meaningfully at Rosscommon, who in turn glanced at Lenore with a look of satisfaction in his eyes. Denis saw the glance, and his heart became heavier than ever. He had not meant to say another word about politics, but unheeding the consequences he went on.

" Of course I am anxious to do what I can for my country. A few weeks ago, when I was coming to take possession of Kildare and was standing on the deck of the boat in the early morning, I seemed to hear a sort of voice. ' What are you going to do for Ireland ? ' it said. And ever since, one of the great problems of my life has been how to answer it."

" Just so," said Sir Charles ; " and what greater service can you render your country than to save it from the rebels and the priests ? "

" I can think of none," replied Denis. " But pardon me, do you do that by keeping things as they are ? "

" At any rate you save the loyal Protestants from ruin."

" Do Protestants need saving ? " replied Denis. " As far as I can see they are abundantly able to take care of themselves. Three-fourths of Ireland is completely under priest rule now, and yet nine-tenths of the prosperous people are Protestants. The problem as I see it is not to save Protestants from priest rule ; they simply laugh at it, and defy it. The real question is, how are you going to help all these poor priest-ridden peasants ? How are you going to free them from priestly control ? What is the means whereby they are to break their chains ? What will make them strong and independent ? Pardon me for saying so, but the Unionist policy is simply negative. If the present system

of government remains, things simply go on as they are. The Roman hierarchy simply continues to dominate the country, and to control almost every phase of the nation's life. Education will continue under priestly dominion; so will everything else; while your Government officials will continue to obey the dictum of highly placed ecclesiastics."

"And do you think you would help matters by placing everything more completely under their control by Act of Parliament?" asked Sir William.

"I am only a learner yet," replied Denis; "I do not presume to try and teach. But has not giving power and responsibility to the democracy always meant the breaking down of privilege and priestly authority? Has not self-government always been a disintegrating force?"

"Very disintegrating," replied Sir William. "Give self-government to the Irish peasant and everything would be disintegrated."

"We might be listening to Pat O'Hara," laughed Stephen Rosscommon.

"By the way, is Pat still hale and hearty?" asked Sir William Wilkins, as if desirous of turning the conversation into a different channel.

"I know nothing about him," replied Sir Charles Tyrone, "except that he is a dangerous old man, and has been the mainspring of all the sedition, the rioting, and the outrages which have disgraced our country. No respectable man has anything to do with him, and I would never open my doors to a man who was friendly with the old wretch."

Denis felt his face become crimson. He felt sure that this was meant for him. Did Sir Charles know of his visit to Rathsheen? Nothing was more probable. He turned again towards Lenore, and saw that she was laughing at something Stephen Rosscommon had said. He was tempted to be quiet, but the old fighting blood asserted itself.

"Are you not mistaken in him?" asked Denis. "I never met him but once, and he struck me as being neither a rebel nor a wretch."

"Then I am sorry for you," replied the baronet coldly.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE CRISIS

THE evening passed without any further event worth noting ; nevertheless, Denis felt that a shadow had arisen between himself and the Tyrone family. Sir Charles no longer spoke to him with his old cordiality, while Lenore seemed to avoid him. He thought of Lawyer Mulligan's words. Anyone who had any sympathy with self-government for Ireland put himself outside the little circle of what was called the Irish gentry. His own opinions were far from settled, and he could not see his way to any clear course of action, but his doubtful attitude was resented. It was bad form to be a Home Ruler, just as it was bad form for a gentleman to stand at a public-house bar and joke with the barmaid. It did not seem possible, to such men as Sir Charles Tyrone, for any Protestant gentleman to have any feeling save contempt, if not anger, towards what was spoken of as "the Home Rule gang." Thus it was that, although he was only seeking for light, the very fact that he was trying to recognise any merit in the opinions of the other side made them feel bitterly towards him.

He was loth to believe that such was really the case, although it was brought home to him very keenly just as he was taking his leave. He managed to get a few seconds alone with Lenore, but she was cold towards him, and evidently uncomfortable in his society. "I want another chat with you," he said ; "I want an answer to what I said to you the last time we met."

The girl did not speak, and her face was as cold as marble.

"I seem to be unfortunate in offending you somehow,"

he went on. " You act to me as though I were an outsider. What have I done ? As I told you, I have loved you from the day I saw you on Truro river. You know that, don't you ? "

She shook her head.

" You do not believe me ? "

" I would rather not speak about it," she replied. " I told you my reasons why ; but even if I were disposed to discuss it, could I believe in the love of anyone who is opposed to the things dearest to me ? "

" You mean this political business," he replied angrily. " I am trying to get light—and—and I must follow my convictions."

" I have told you again and again that I could have no sympathy towards anyone who would ruin my country," she replied, and Denis saw that there was an angry look in her eyes ; " and I could never choose as my friends those who would see us drift to ruin and not stretch out a helping hand."

" You mean my refusal to speak at Sir William Wilkins's demonstration ? "

" Pardon me," was the reply, " I did not mean to speak about this at all. Of course you will be loyal to your own friends."

" My friends ! I don't understand you."

At that moment someone interrupted their conversation, and Denis left the house feeling that a barrier had arisen between them. Nothing had apparently happened, and yet everything had changed. At their previous meeting he could have sworn that she loved him, and there was a great burning passion in what she had said to him. But now she seemed a creature of ice.

Yes, doubtless she had heard of his visit to Rathsheen, and resented it. She was angry with everyone who did not favour the cause she had at heart. Never did he realise as now the bitterness caused by political differences in Ireland.

Two days later he was told that Lenore had been elected secretary of a League of Women which had been formed to help the Unionist party. He was further informed that while the League was intended to aid the Anti-Home Rule cause generally, it was formed especially for the

purpose of helping Stephen Rosscommon's election at Connella. He was not at all surprised at this ; nevertheless, the very fact seemed a menace to his happiness. If anyone had asked him if he were a follower of Pat O'Hara, he would have been indignant, and yet he knew he no longer felt as he had felt.

The next day he was moody and taciturn ; he took but little interest in the improvements which were being made in the house and grounds, and was impatient when the men came to him for instructions. After lunch he went to Connella and took the train for Cork, although he had no reason for doing so. When he returned to Kildare again his evil humour had not gone.

Why could he not throw in his lot with Sir William Wilkins's party ? All his interests urged him to do so. He knew he would thereby reinstate himself in Sir Charles Tyrone's good graces ; he believed also that he would gain the smiles of Lenore. Added to this he would be doing what one of his class was expected to do. As far as he knew there was not one of the old Protestant families in the South of Ireland but who threw in their lot with what was called the Unionist party. Why, then, could he not do the same ? He hated priest rule, and practically every Protestant of any position in Ireland declared that to give self-government to the country would be to place it completely in the hands of the Romish Church.

But he could not. He told himself he did not believe in Pat O'Hara's, or in the Quaker's statements, and yet he felt they were right. His heart longed for Lenore more than words could say, and yet he could not do that which meant gaining her smile.

A few days later he found himself on the road to Rath-sheen again, while all the time his heart was at Clonnell. Of course the news of his second visit would reach Lenore's ears, even as that of the first had ; he knew, too, that his action would darken the shadow that had come between them. But he went grimly on ; he wanted another talk with the old man about the question which was exciting the country, and which had formed a barrier between him and Lenore.

There could be no doubt about it ; old Pat O'Hara did not meet him with the same warmth as he had expected. His welcome was halting, his manner constrained.

" You gave me a general invitation to come over," said Denis, " and I have taken you at your word. I hope Miss O'Hara is well ? "

" My granddaughter is quite well," replied the old man quietly.

" I—I am afraid my visit is not—not opportune," stammered Denis, who could not help noticing the change in the old Irishman's demeanour.

" I've been expecting you for days," replied Pat, " and I've been wondering how I ought to meet you."

" I'm afraid I do not understand you," said the young man.

" Come out into the garden," said Pat quietly, and the two wandered towards the ruins. " Look here," he continued, " before I ask you to dinner, which I want to very badly, there are some things I want to say, a question I want to ask. Am I right in believing that John Grubb and I altered your point of view about Irish affairs the other night ? "

" I'm not quite sure," replied Denis. " Yes, I am, though : you have."

" At any rate you feel that it is something worth thinking about. You do not discard it as a kind of Utopian dream ? "

" What—that to give the peasants self-government is the only power that will eventually give the Irish peasant independence of character, and thus free him from priest-craft ? "

" Roughly that—yes."

" No ; it is something which appeals to me very strongly, although I do not yet see my way to accepting it."

" Just so ; now I want to talk with you plainly—very plainly."

There was a note of earnestness in old Pat's voice which Denis had never noticed before. His face, too, had become very grave.

" You have come to-night to have a further chat about it ? "

" Yes, that and other things."

" Just so. Well, I want you to count the cost before you go any further."

" Count the cost ? I am not sure that I understand you."

" I have thought a good deal about you since you were

here the other day," said old Pat, very earnestly. "I believe you to be a singularly honest fellow. I believe you are anxiously trying to get at the truth. In short, you are the kind of fellow who will finally accept this position—that is, if you continue to interest yourself in Irish affairs."

"I must interest myself," cried Denis; "I cannot help it."

"Then, I say, count the cost, Mr. Kildare. I am an old man, and I've had a good deal of experience. Do you want to lose the friendship of the Tyrones, the Clares, the Hollands, and the rest of them?"

"No, I don't."

"Would the loss of their friendship trouble you a great deal?"

"A very great deal. More than I can tell you."

"Then my advice to you is, go back to Kildare at once; don't stay to dinner, don't be seen speaking with me, and don't mix yourself up in politics at all, unless you can repeat the Shibboleth of those who, as they term it, 'want to save the Union.'"

Denis laughed. "There's quite a tragic ring in your voice," he said.

"I want to be brutally frank," continued old Pat; "and I tell you this: if you are friendly with me, and visit me in a friendly way, you forfeit the friendship of the people I have mentioned. If you accept the position which old John Grubb put forward the other night, you will become a pariah, you will be shut out from what is called Society. I go further, and I say this: if you were engaged to be married to a young lady of your own class, and you were to be mixed up in what they call 'old Pat O'Hara's gang,' that young lady and her people would in all probability close their doors on you. I'm not saying who's right or who's wrong just now. My views may be of the devil, and I may justify all their opinions about me; that's not the question. The fact is, the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans as far as personal friendships are concerned; and although you are the owner of one of the finest old places in Ireland, you will, if you become friendly with me, or throw in your lot with those of my way of thinking, put yourself outside the

pale of what is called 'good society'; your old friends will avoid you, and you will be left alone."

Denis's eyes hardened; he was getting angry.

"Do you mean that if a man follows his convictions he becomes a kind of leper?" he said.

"I mean, that the people of England do not realise the bitterness caused by political divisions here in Ireland. If you—well, become friendly with me, and sympathise with me, you will be severely left alone; and the doors that have been opened to you will be closed. I am saying this because I believe you are being drawn to my way of thinking, and that we may possibly see a good deal of each other. I want to tell you what this means; that is all."

"And do you think I'll give up what I believe to be true and right, because—because——"

"I hope not," said Pat quickly.

"Of course," went on Denis thoughtfully, "I have heard suggestions of this before; but do you really mean to tell me that, say, Sir Charles Tyrone and his family, with whom I have been very friendly, would—would discard me?"

"That is what I really mean," replied Pat, watching his face keenly.

"I hope you are wrong," said Denis; "I hope it is all wild exaggeration; but——" and then he was silent for a few seconds. It was a critical time in Denis's life, although he did not think of it in that way. After all, what were political questions with him in comparison with the love of Lenore Tyrone? She had been the bright star of his life for years, and—yes, this old man was right. He believed Sir Charles would close his doors in his face if he opposed his policy, he believed that Lenore— Then all the old fighting instincts were aroused again. He remembered his mother's story, and the story of his own infancy as the old lawyer had related it to him. Would he submit to be gagged? Were these people to dictate to him the manner of his life? Was not this boycotting?

"I think it is your dinner-hour," he said, looking at his watch, "and I'm afraid I'm frightfully hungry."

Old Pat grasped his hand. "I expected it av ye, and I'm proud av ye," he said.

"Mind, I don't know that I believe in your politics at

all," said Denis; "probably I never shall; only——" And then he walked by the old man's side towards the house.

They found Rosaleen on the lawn, and no sooner did she see Denis than her eyes lit up with joy.

"Sure, and I hoped it might be you when I heard a man's voice talking with granddad," she cried; "and—but you'll stay to our evening meal with us?"

"If you'll have me," he replied.

The girl laughed aloud for joy. She took no pains to hide the fact that she was genuinely delighted at his coming.

"Ah, but it's plain homely fare you'll have to content yourself with," she cried. "I know, because I cooked it myself."

"Then it's sure to be good," replied Denis with a laugh. It was wonderful how this girl's presence chased away his dark thoughts and brought laughter to his heart. Her joy became infectious; and it seemed natural to forget dull care.

To Denis the simple meal was a revelation. The food was plain, almost to coarseness, and yet there was an air of refinement that surrounded everything. Rosaleen produced some wonderful old silver, while the table linen, though worn, was of the finest quality. It was a peasant's meal, served like a king's banquet. The great dining-hall, too, seemed to give an air of importance, while it did not detract from the homeliness of the occasion. Pat looked like an old Irish chieftain; and while he was as merry as a boy, he never forgot that he was the representative of one of the oldest families in Ireland.

Pat never thought of adopting the ordinary evening clothes, but he lost nothing thereby. No one would take him for a commoner. He was an Irish gentleman of the first order.

Neither had Rosaleen's attire any suggestion of the woman of fashion, but she had evidently dressed herself with more than usual care. Denis could not remember a single detail of anything she wore, but he reflected that any lady in the land might envy her wondrous loveliness. Without any of the usual aids to beauty, she was resplendent in her glorious youth, and in all that youth meant.

The evening passed like a dream. After dinner the

two men smoked together, and had a long talk about Ireland, its past story, its glory, its sorrows, its hopes, its fears. Then an hour before it was time for him to leave Rosaleen sang to him: sang the old Irish songs which she loved so much. Her moods seemed to change with her songs. At one time she was just a revengeful savage, as she sang of Ireland's sorrows and victories and defeats. Again, she was the spirit of girlish love, as she poured forth old Irish ballads. Her eyes flashed fire, her voice became tremulous. She was a child of love, longing for her mate.

"I shall never forget this night," she said to Denis just before he left. "You don't know what it means to me to have someone here who can understand that I am young, and love a girl's life. Night after night I sit here alone, and think and wonder. Sometimes I am afraid. Do you think the spirits of those long dead can come back, Mr. Kildare? There are times when I am sure of it. I can hear them wailing around the house. I can see them among the ruins. They come to me when I am in bed, and stand watching me. I tell myself it's all my own imagination; but is it? I'm a child of twenty generations of O'Haras. Is it any wonder those of my family long dead come back, and bewail our departed glory. Besides, I'm very lonely sometimes; I have no one of my own age to talk to, and—and—Here comes granddad; he must not know this. He thinks I'm always happy, and I don't want to undeceive him."

She dashed away her tears and came towards the old man with a laugh.

"Mr. Kildare says he's coming again soon," she cried, "and I believe you'll convert him. Won't it be grand if he joins us in the fight? Why, of course he will! He's an Irishman born, although he has lived in England, and he loves his country, and so he must work for Irish freedom."

"And if I didn't, Miss O'Hara?" He spoke with a laugh, although there was a touch of seriousness in his voice.

"Then you'd be unworthy of your country," she cried.

"But suppose I couldn't conscientiously work for the things you believe in," he persisted; "suppose, on the other hand, I felt it to be my duty to fight for England retaining its rule over Ireland. What then?"

"Ah, but you couldn't!" she cried.

"But if I did—would you still be friends with me?"

A strange hard look came into the girl's face, and for a moment she did not speak. Denis saw that the question affected her greatly; saw, too, the wild passion in her eyes which reminded him of a beautiful savage; but it was only for a minute.

"Sure and I'm not going to think of it at all," she laughed. "You are coming to see us again, and it's granddad who'll convert ye. Won't ye, granddad?"

But the old man did not speak; he seemed to be thinking deeply.

"I do not believe in friendships that depend on mere political opinions," said Denis, his mind going back to his last meeting with Lenore.

"Ah, but," cried the girl, "the cause of Ireland is not a mere set of political opinions; with us it's a passion, it's life."

"That's what the other side say too," replied Denis.

"Ah, but do they love Ireland, as we do? Why, think of all the Irish landlords who talk about Home Rule ruining the country. Do they love Ireland? For years they have taken our money, but they've lived in England. Are they the people who care for Ireland?"

"I'll not try and answer," laughed Denis; "but we are friends now, aren't we?"

"Yes, and always will be," she cried, with all the ardour and all the artlessness of a child.

After this Denis paid several visits to Rathsheen, and every time he went he became more and more convinced that old Pat was right. Ireland would never be happy, never contented under English rule. Moreover, as day by day he saw how priest-governed the people were, he was strengthened in his belief that no set of circumstances would ever save the nation, only in so far as those circumstances helped them to think their own thoughts and fight their own battles. Ireland was in the main, as far as practical purposes went, a nation of children, and the people would never become strong and progressive until they lived in an atmosphere of responsibility, until they were taught to govern themselves.

Meanwhile the man who represented the Connella Division in the English Parliament was slowly dying. But he

did not resign his seat. For some reason the Nationalist party would not hear of his resignation ; and as the man never gave up hopes of getting better, he gladly fell in with their wishes. Stephen Rosscommon was hard at work in the division, and from all Denis could hear was making headway. He had held several meetings, and although they were somewhat turbulent, nothing serious had happened at them. The great demonstration which Sir William Wilkins had come to Clonnell to arrange had also been held, and as people had come from far and near, there was a large assembly and much enthusiasm. But Denis did not go near. He felt the meaning of the saying that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. A few days before the demonstration he had sent a line to Sir Charles Tyrone, saying he wished to see him on a certain matter, and suggested his calling at Clonnell. In reply he received a curt note, saying it would not be convenient for Sir Charles to see Mr. Kildare at the time he had mentioned, neither, indeed, did he think that any useful purpose would be served by discussing the matter which Mr. Kildare had mentioned.

Denis laughed bitterly as he read the note. It was plain that Sir Charles regarded all friendship between them at an end, and that he no longer desired to see the young man at his house. And yet he had made no public declaration of any change of political faith ; indeed, he was fighting a hard battle in order to retain the faith he had hitherto held. For although Denis enjoyed his visits to Rathsheen, and while both Pat and Rosaleen always met him with undiminished kindness, his heart was yearning for Lenore.

"Why," he asked himself bitterly, "should I be ostracised because I cannot accept their creed without question, and am trying to think out these things for myself ? Surely Lenore can be no party to this ? She is simply obeying her father's wishes."

Still, as he heard of her arduous labours on behalf of Rosscommon's candidature, his heart became bitter and heavy. What hope had he ? More than once he was tempted to give up troubling about Irish affairs, and live for his own happiness ; but as he entered more and more into the life of the people he found it was impossible.

One day, towards the end of July, he found himself in a village about a mile beyond Lenore's home. He had gone there to see a man on a business matter, and decided to walk home through the fields. He had scarcely entered the footpath when he saw Lenore. Instantly his heart was on fire, and before he realised what he was doing he rushed to her side.

He thought she looked pale and anxious, and in spite of his fears the fact gave him hope.

"I have been longing to see you for weeks," he cried.

His ardour seemed to have some effect, for the colour came to her cheeks and light into her eyes.

"But you have taken no trouble to see me," was her response. Nevertheless, she took his outstretched hand.

"I have been practically forbidden to enter your house," and there was anger in his voice.

She looked at him in astonishment.

"Perhaps that's putting it too strongly," he went on; "but I wrote your father asking him to see me on a certain question, and suggested calling at your house. You see," he added, "I hoped that I might see you."

"Well?" and the girl looked at him questioningly.

"He sent back a short note, written in the third person, saying it would be inconvenient for him to see me at the hour mentioned, and saw no use in talking with me."

A look of anger flashed from the girl's eyes. "I had not the least idea—that, is I never heard—" then she stopped suddenly, as if afraid of saying more.

"I hoped you hadn't," he cried impulsively; "but what could I do? I dared not run the risk of having the door shut in my face, especially as I did not know whether—"

"Whether what?" she asked as he hesitated.

"Whether you felt as your father felt," he replied bluntly. "But, Lenore, I have just ached to come. You remember what I told you, don't you?"

"Is it of any use our speaking about that?" and he noticed that her voice had become cold.

"My life's happiness depends on it," he cried. "I know what you said about—that is, about Rosscommon; but you do not love him; you cannot, you cannot!"

His heart was all ablaze now, and caution was cast to the winds.

" You are not bound to him by a gossamer thread," he went on passionately, " and—but you know—you understand."

They walked for some distance along the meadow path in silence.

" You have thought of me *sometimes* since I was at your house, haven't you ? " he pleaded.

" I have thought a good deal," she replied quietly.

His heart bounded for joy, but he spoke no word ; there was something in the tone of her voice that silenced him.

" Mr. Kildare," she said presently, " is what you told me true ? I mean on that night when—when I first told you what was in my heart."

" A thousand times more than I said was true," he cried fervently ; " a thousand times more. But you know, Lenore, you know."

" How much does that mean ? " she said, and her voice was hard.

" It means everything to me. Why, during those years before we spoke to each other, you were—everything to me. You were my guardian angel. Humanly speaking, you were my saviour. I told you—you remember."

" I was wondering how much your love was worth."

" It is worth everything I am worth ; I gave you my life."

The girl's colour heightened ; her eyes became luminous.

" You care for me," there was passion in his voice ; " you love me ! "

He grasped her hands and looked eagerly into her eyes.

" No, no ; wait ! " She was silent for a moment, and then she went on : " Love means service ; it means sacrifice."

" It does, it does," was his answer, " and I desire nothing better than to devote my life to you."

" You mean that ? " there was a ring of excitement in her voice.

" Try me, tell me of something you would have me do for you."

" And you will be willing to regard what I shall ask as a test of your love ? "

" Try me," he repeated. " There is nothing I will not do for you."

"Work to save Ireland from the Romanists, from the rebels," she said.

"You mean——?"

"Fight for the cause of the Union. Live to save Ireland from these political agitators; ally yourself with the Unionist party; give up associating yourself with men like Pat O'Hara."

Denis was silent, and his heart became like lead.

"Listen to me, Lenore," he said presently; "let me tell you how I feel about the whole question."

"I don't wish to hear about it," and she spoke impatiently. "I know all you would say; I've heard all the arguments a thousand times. It's no mere political question with me, it's a passion; it's my home, my country. If you love me you will help to save what I love."

"I will, I will, but——"

"There can be no buts," she interrupted. "Since that night—under the acacia tree—I—I have thought a great deal about what you said, and—and—oh, how can I do, how can I be what you ask while you are cold to that which is almost as dear as life to me? How can I believe you while you plot with men like O'Hara for giving everything we have, our homes, our very life, into the hands of priests and rebels?"

"You do not understand, Lenore," urged Denis. "I love Ireland too, and I want to live for my country. I am as anxious as you are to save Ireland from rebels and priests. I would——"

"No, no; do not go on," she said bitterly. "I know what you would say, and it's mockery, mockery. Do you think we who have lived here all our lives do not know that what you are thinking of is pure madness? What is the use of talking about giving the people of Ireland self-government? It would be placing us more than ever under the heel of the priests; it would be giving all we have to murderous rebels."

"But if I believe——"

"Good-bye," she said, interrupting; "evidently I have been wrong to hope."

"But surely you will not allow a difference of opinion about politics to divide us?" he persisted. "You will not destroy my life because——"

"It is not a mere matter of political opinion," she answered passionately. "The cause of Ireland is as dear as life to me. If what I have been told is true, you have been plotting with rebels against Ireland's freedom. If you love me, as you say you do, you will try and save my country. You will fight these rebels. I cannot believe in your love else."

"You mean," he cried, "that you cannot believe in my love unless I believe as you believe?"

"I mean," she said slowly, "that I cannot believe in your love if, knowing what I feel about this matter, you do not join me in the cause for which I would die?"

"And if I would?"

The girl gave him a look which set every nerve tingling, and caused his heart to beat with tumultuous joy.

"But if I cannot?" he said presently.

"I would rather die than—give my life to a man who—who— But no, I cannot think of it. It would be treason—sacrilege."

## CHAPTER XX

### THE *NE TEMERE* DECREE

"THAT is your answer, then?" said Denis presently. His voice was dry and hard. He felt difficulty in speaking at all. His tongue, his lips, were parched.

"It is the only answer I am able to give."

"Your love for your party is more than your love for me, then?" he could not help saying, and his voice had a touch of bitterness.

"You are unfair to me to say that," she replied. "My love for my country is almost a religion with me. I was born here, reared here, educated here. I know what these rebels have done, what they would do. Our own steward was shot, my father's life has been in danger. We could get no justice, the priests would not allow it. How, then, could I link my life with the life of a man who would hand over my country to them?"

"Rather he would save the country from them. Even you, Lenore, cannot hate priest rule more than I do."

She looked at him steadily. "You have made your choice, I see," she said quietly. "Good evening."

"Lenore," he cried eagerly, "I love you, love you! The fact that you may think differently from me in this matter does not alter my love one iota. But I have tried to think as you think, to see as you see. I came to Ireland, believing as you believe. But facts have convinced me that I was wrong. Ireland is under the dictum of Rome now, and nothing can give Ireland freedom from Rome, save that which will enable the people to work out their own salvation. The more I have thought about it, the more I am convinced that only responsibility, self-government, will eventually lead the people to assert their manhood and throw off the yoke of the priest. While England governs

Ireland, the people's neck will remain under the priests' yoke ; let them govern themselves and they will snap their bands in sunder, and Ireland will become free."

The girl's eyes flashed impatiently, and she turned as if to leave him.

"Nay, don't go," he pleaded. "Surely you will not allow this difference of opinion to separate us?"

"Difference of *opinion*!" was her answer. "If that is all it is to you there is no more to say."

"But, Lenore, my life's happiness is in your hands," he cried ; "surely you will not destroy it for ever?"

"If your happiness depends upon me, you are destroying it yourself ; you are slamming the door in my face, and bolting it. Besides, is—is my happiness nothing?" and there was a sob in her voice.

The ground seemed slipping from under his feet. The summer sky had become black.

"But can we not each be true to our own conviction? I would not interfere with you in any way, Lenore. I would respect the beliefs that are dear to you."

"And fight against them," she cried. "What trust, what sympathy could there be between us?"

"But if I withdrew all my opposition," he urged desperately. "If I promised to take no part in this struggle, and—and just did nothing?"

The girl's eyes shone with a bright light, but only for a moment.

"No," she said, "that is impossible. If you believe as you say you do, you could not be supine. You could not let the battle go on and take no part in it. It would be cowardly, it would be wrong."

He felt she was right. His was an eager, positive nature. He could not play the part of Gallio in the struggle. He must strike on one side or the other.

"Is there no way out?" he said presently ; "will you sacrifice nothing?"

"Am I sacrificing nothing, in saying what I have said?" there was anger in her voice. "Do you think my father has not pleaded with me to—to—"

She ceased suddenly, as though she dared not give utterance to the words that rose to her lips.

"I know," said Denis slowly ; "forgive me, Lenore, and

thank you for saying what you have. Only God knows how I long to——” He hesitated, and then went on : “ Give me till to-morrow, will you ? Let me think it all over again.”

“ Is there any use in that ? ” and her voice was hopeless.

“ I’ll think it all out again,” he cried. “ I’ll go over every-thing point by point ; I’ll see if there’s no way out. There may be ; and if there is, I’ll find it.”

“ Will you ? ” she asked eagerly ; “ and—and you’ll try—you’ll try hard, won’t you ? ”

Again Denis’s heart beat with joy. Her words were a confession of love. They told him that she no longer regarded any thoughts that might be in Rosscommon’s mind as of importance. They told him that the man who had wanted her from childhood was nothing to her.

“ There must be a way out,” and he almost laughed ; “ love will make a way. Let us forget all difficulties for the moment, Lenore ; let us live in the present. There, let me walk back with you.”

“ No,” she said ; “ find the way first—Denis. Good-night. I shall not sleep to-night. I shall be thinking of to-morrow.”

She left him as he spoke, while he stood watching her. He saw her as she walked through two meadows, and then when she reached the stile which led to her father’s park she turned and waved her hand to him.

“ I must, I will find a way,” he said as he made his way back to his own house. For the moment difficulties did not exist, and he rejoiced in the thought of her love. It seemed only a little thing that divided them. A mere difference of opinion on a matter of politics. Of course everything would be right, and his heart sang for joy.

When he reached the village near Kildare Castle he saw that something of importance was afoot. The people stood in groups, talking eagerly, while an air of excitement prevailed.

“ What’s the matter, Terence ? ” he said to one of his gardeners who was in the village street.

“ Faith, and Mistress Murphy’s children are gone.”

“ Mistress Murphy’s children gone ! ”

“ Yes, and Jim Murphy’s gone too.”

"Why has he gone?"

"Haven't ye heard, yer honour? Bedad, and it took place hours ago."

"What took place hours ago?"

"Faith, and it's me that'll tell yer honour. As ye'll have heard that Jim Murphy is a Catholic, and that he married Kitty Macfarlane, who was a servant-maid in Cork. And she is a Protestant, yer honour."

Terence stopped suddenly. "Faith, and I've forgotten everything," he said fearfully.

"Forgotten everything!" questioned Denis; "what do you mean?"

"Begorra, and askin' yer pardon, but that's Biddy callin' me. I'll be askin' yer honour to excuse me."

Denis followed the frightened glance of the man and saw Father O'Sheen, one of Father Meharry's curates. Evidently the priest had warned the man to hold his tongue.

"What can all this mystery and excitement be about?" thought the young man. He was about to enter the cabin of some people he knew, when he saw Father Meharry coming down the street talking excitedly to Mr. Holland, the Protestant rector. Knowing that the two were not in the habit of fraternising, Denis wondered all the more.

"I tell you I know nothing about it," he heard the priest say.

"But you must know," and the rector's voice was angry. "A thing like this can't be done in a corner."

"Then seeing you know what I know, better than I know myself, I needn't say another word," said the priest; "anyhow, it's me that won't discuss it with you."

"But everything shall be brought to light—everything," cried the rector.

"Well, bring it to light, and see what good it will do," cried Father Meharry.

"But the thing is iniquitous. I tell you so plainly. It is inhuman, devilish."

The priest stood still in the street, while the crowd gathered.

"If the Church says they were never married there's an end to it," he shouted, and it was evident that anger had well-nigh overcome him. "And I tell ye this"—his voice almost rising to a shriek—"neither you nor any other heretic shall

call the decrees of the Church infamous. If you do, then ye'll have to take the consequences."

Father Meharry turned away, leaving the rector alone, except for the people who stood watching him.

"Can you tell me what all this trouble's about, Mr. Holland?" said Denis as he came up to him.

"Ah, Mr. Kildare, is that you?" said the other; "haven't you heard the news?"

"Nothing definite. Terence Malone began to tell me something about Jim Murphy and his wife, and then stopped like a man frightened."

The two walked towards the Protestant parsonage some distance before the rector spoke again.

"If the people will not believe now, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead," said Mr. Holland.—"Perhaps it will even open *your* eyes."

"I do not understand. In what way do my eyes need opening?"

"I hope what I've heard is not true," replied the rector. "But it is said you've forsaken the cause of the Union, and gone over to Pat O'Hara's side. It's true he does not pretend to be a priests' man, but it amounts to the same thing in the end. Those who would take away Ireland from the direct government of England would hand the country over to complete priest rule. I hope, however, that you'll be convinced now."

"But in what way? Tell me."

"You know Jim Murphy and his wife Kitty?"

"Yes."

"Jim met Kitty in Cork, and married her. A good girl she is if ever there was one. She was a Presbyterian, and a member of the Presbyterian Church. They were married by the girl's own minister, and then, Jim's father having died, he took on his father's farm. You know these facts, I expect?"

"Yes; well?"

"They have been a very happy couple, and two children have been born to them. Now the children have been robbed from her."

"How robbed?"

"A few days ago a priest from Cork came and told her that she had never been married to Jim Murphy, and that

she was living in sin. You've heard about this *Ne Temere* decree, I suppose? Well, according to this decree, which was published some time ago, no Romanist is married unless the marriage is sacramentally performed. That is to say, it must be performed by a priest. This Roman Catholic law was enforced in certain countries, but not in England. In 1898, however, the Pope decreed that it must apply to the British Isles. You see the position then. Jim Murphy, a Roman Catholic, was married to Kitty Macfarlane in a Protestant church; and although the ceremony was legally performed, and by a highly respected Presbyterian minister, the Roman Catholic Church declared that this was no marriage at all, and that the two were living in sin. Do you follow me?"

"Yes, I follow you perfectly."

"Well, a few days ago, Kitty came to me, and told me that a priest from Cork had been to her, and told her that she was not married at all, and that as a consequence she was living in sin, and that her children were children of shame. As you know, there is no Presbyterian church here, and she came to me as the Protestant rector of the parish."

Denis found himself setting his teeth firmly together; the thing was iniquitous.

"The priest wanted her to be married again in a Roman Catholic church," went on the rector, "and she refused."

"Good!" muttered the young man under his breath.

"He offered to perform the ceremony secretly, so that no one need know anything about it; but still the woman refused. He and Father Mehaberry also got hold of Murphy, and frightened him; and he, in his turn, has been trying to persuade Kitty to be married again, this time by Roman Catholic rites. The woman still refused."

"Good!" said Denis again. He admired the courage of the girl.

"The affair has been kept quiet," went on Mr. Holland; "the girl is proud, and did not want the matter made public, while it appears that the man was commanded to be silent. Well, this morning, while Kitty went out for a little while leaving the children in care of a little girl, someone came and kidnapped them. She was away only two hours, but

it seems her movements were watched, for on her return the children were gone."

"The children gone!"

"The children gone, and the little girl who was supposed to look after them was gone too."

"Of course it is the Church."

"Of course. You see, when this *Ne Temere* decree was made applicable to this country the priests could do no other than enforce it. I have just been up to see the woman.

"She is wild with grief."

"And the husband?"

"He is not home yet. It seems that he went to Cork early this morning, and has not returned. I fear for the woman's reason."

Denis was silent. The affair was too horrible for words.

"You see," went on the rector, "the woman's feelings do not count with the Romanist Church; nothing counts but its own supremacy. No weapons are too cruel for that Church to use, no means too base. Of course Meharry argues that it becomes a matter of conscience, of duty, of obedience to an infallible Church; but the logic of the whole ghastly business remains unaltered. The Church has stepped in, and so far as can be seen it has destroyed a happy home; it has, by robbing a woman of her children, destroyed her life."

"But surely she will be able to get them back?"

"All that can be done shall be done. I am this very night going to write to the Lord-Lieutenant and the Home Secretary. But we have to remember that in fighting the Church we are wellnigh powerless. However, I will do what I can."

"If I can be of any service, pray use me," said Denis.

"Thank you," replied the rector, "I will remember what you say. At any rate it will be an object-lesson to us all. It will show us more than ever what the Church of Rome is; it will show us, too, the madness of handing the country over to a Dublin Parliament. I hope it will convince you, Mr. Kildare, that however the priests may hate old Pat O'Hara, all his mad schemes will mean handing Ireland, body and soul, over to the Church which has enforced this ghastly decree in our midst. I should think

no man can be proud of being a Home Ruler after this. Good-night."

They parted at the rectory gate, Mr. Holland to write his letters to the Government officials, the young squire to ponder over what he had heard. He had felt the sting of the rector's words; he had realised that all through the conversation there was an implied condemnation of the position into which he had been drifting.

Well, and were they not right? How could he work for giving self-government to Ireland after this? A Dublin Parliament would be controlled by the priests, and Ireland would be completely under their dominion. If the Church would enforce such a decree while the country was ostensibly under a Protestant Government, what would it do if it directly dominated the destinies of the country?

As he walked through the village he found that the people were discussing the event which had taken place. He tried to get into conversation with them, but found them disinclined to speak freely with him. He could not help feeling, however, that many of the villagers hated the thing which had been done, but they dared not speak against it. If the Church had decreed this thing, they must meekly accept it, no matter what they felt. The fear of the Church had gripped them body and soul.

"If only they were left to themselves, they would make short work of this kind of thing; but they are afraid of Meharry, they are afraid of his curates," he reflected. "Not a Roman Catholic in the parish, no matter what he may feel, has courage enough to get up and denounce it."

Presently he found himself in the lane which led to Jim Murphy's cottage. Not a soul was near. Denis heard afterwards that Father Meharry had forbidden the people to visit her. He entered the cottage, and found the woman sitting like one dazed. She had been going around for hours trying to find her children, and now that night was coming on and not knowing what she could do more, had decided to wait for her husband.

He tried to get her to tell him her story, but she seemed too overwhelmed to do so. At every question he asked her, he was met by the bitter wail, "Oh, my two little children! Give me back my children!"

"But you should not be here alone," said Denis.

"Are there no neighbours who will come and sit with you?"

"The priest will not allow the Roman Catholics to come, even if I wanted them," she replied. "Two or three Protestants have been here, but I sent them away. I wanted to be alone till Jim came. They said they'd come back again presently."

Denis's heart was full of pity as he looked at her. She was little more than a child, and her heart was wrapped up in the children she had lost.

"Perhaps your husband will be able to help you when he comes back," said Denis.

She shook her head hopelessly. "He's been saying all sorts of strange things to me for days," she replied with a sob. "They've frightened him, they've frightened him! Oh, I'll have to find them myself! But where can I go, what can I do? I've been to every house for a mile around."

"Of course you refused to be married again?"

"Why should I be married again?" and there was a sullen passion in her eyes. "I was married—truly married; and if I consented to be married again, it would be as good as saying I've been living with a man I wasn't married to. No, I couldn't do that."

"I'll do everything in my power to help you," said Denis as he left the cottage.

"Oh, tell me how I can get my little babies!" she sobbed.

"I'll try," he replied; "don't give up heart. Perhaps when your husband comes back everything will turn out right."

She shook her head with a moan. "Oh God, help me to find my children!" she sobbed again and again.

Denis walked back to the Castle thoughtfully. His dinner-hour had long passed, but he had forgotten all about it. The events of the last few hours had shaken his life to the very centre. He must get back to the house and think everything out carefully.

He refused to take any of the food which had been prepared for him; he felt as though it would choke him. He found his way to the library, and sat for hours alone, trying to face the problems that faced him. One fact gave him joy: he felt sure that Lenore loved him. She had as good as told him so; nay, she had besought him

to remove the obstacle that stood between them and happiness. Well, why should he not? Did not Sir Charles Tyrone, and Sir William Wilkins, and Rosscommon, and Squire Clare know better what was good for Ireland than he? The intensity of their hatred of the thing called Home Rule must surely have a vital meaning. The cleavage among the Irish people on this matter was deep and wide. He had heard that when Mr. Gladstone first introduced a Home Rule Bill for Ireland into the British House of Commons, it had divided families and destroyed friendships. Men who had been comrades for long years, and had been linked together by all sorts of family ties, found themselves embittered and estranged. But the bitterness had died out; now, Liberal and Conservative, Unionist and Home Ruler, no matter how much they might be opposed in politics, were friends as far as social and private life were concerned. But not so in Ireland. As Lenore had said, the question of Ireland's government was not a matter of party politics, it was a passion; it was almost a religion. That was why Lenore had said it was impossible for his hopes to be realised while he sympathised with the policy that she loathed.

Well, was she not right? He thought of poor Kitty Murphy sobbing out her heart's sorrow. He pictured her lonely and desolate, because the Church had cruelly robbed her of her little children. Would not Home Rule mean giving more power to the priests? If it would, then he would fight it to the death. But did it? Was not this *Ne Temere* decree not only enunciated, but enforced even, while Ireland was under the control of a Protestant Parliament? Ireland *was* under Rome Rule, even although the British House of Commons was mainly composed of Protestants, and it would continue under Rome Rule as long as this state of things obtained. Ireland could never be free until her people were led to arise and stand upon their feet. If the party to which Lenore was allied had its way, everything would remain as it was. The priests would remain masters of the situation, no matter what party might be in office. Land Acts might be passed, and money might be poured in from England, but it was the Church, the priests who were eventually enriched. Education laws might be passed, but the priests controlled

the schools. No Government, whether Liberal or Conservative, dared to pass anything like popular measures for Ireland ; it dared not : the Church was all-powerful. And the Church had this power because it had enslaved the people's wills and controlled their consciences. Not until the people were emancipated could there be a free Ireland ; not until they ruled themselves would they shake themselves from the power of Rome, would there be a free and independent nation. And he believed that self-government would be the great working force that would make the change. The history of other countries had shown this. A sense of responsibility had caused other nations to throw off the yoke of Rome, why should it not be so in Ireland ? The Church laughed at Dublin Castle ; it used English officialism as a tool to accomplish its own ends. But that Church was for ever powerless in the face of a free democracy. Italy was a Roman Catholic country, but the Church dared not do there what it had done in the British Isles.

The thought gripped him, mastered him. Whether it was right or wrong, it convinced Denis Kildare of its truth. Ireland could only be saved by treating the people, not as children, but as independent responsible citizens. His heart was saddened as he saw how the priests controlled almost every phase of the national life, and he longed to see Irish men and women stand erect in the strength of their own life, and refuse to allow anyone to take away from them that without which true manhood is impossible.

And then the whole problem came back to him. If he believed this, and acted on it, as surely he must, all hope of winning Lenore was gone. What he could not help believing was to her so much poison ; what he regarded as the hope of Ireland would be to her Ireland's curse.

She had revealed herself to him in a new light that day. In spite of himself he had regarded her as cold, as almost incapable of passion. Her attitude towards Ireland's government seemed to him a matter of unreasoning prejudices, rather than the result of reasoning. Now he knew otherwise. She was capable of passion ; her soul was on fire even now. She could suffer and die for what she believed to be true. She was a true child of

Ireland in her warm-heartedness, in her fidelity to her faith.

And she would be his if he discarded the faith which, in spite of himself, was forced upon him. But could he discard it?

He slept little that night. He realised that on the morrow he must tell Lenore of his decision. Well, he would place himself on her side. All the instincts of his class, all the influences of his earlier beliefs, told him that this was right, while his heart loudly demanded that even if his newly found political faith were right, it was as nothing compared with the love of Lenore Tyrone.

Besides, everything was uncertain. It was not certain that things would work out as he believed. It might be that self-government in Ireland would mean more and more priest government; it might mean that his fellow Protestants would be driven from the land, even as Sir Charles Tyrone urged.

But he did not believe it. All the facts of life, all history would be a lie if this were so. He recalled the history of the past fifty years; he thought of long and bloody struggles. How utterly futile force had been in quelling discontent, and how fiercely the people had fought for the power to govern Ireland by the will of its own people!

The following morning when he came down to breakfast his face was pale and haggard. The marks of battle were upon him. Love had been fighting against conscience, and as yet neither had won the complete victory. If he were only sure! But certainty concerning some matters is impossible.

Several letters awaited him. Most of them he read hastily and threw them aside. Presently he came to the last in the little pile.

"It is from old Pat O'Hara," he said to himself. "What does he want?"

A minute later his eyes flashed with a new light.

"**MY DEAR KILDARE**" (he read),—

"The time for action has come. Geary has been given a week to live, and an election must be upon us. The priests have got their man, a fellow who calls himself a Nationalist, but in reality is only a pawn on the

clerical chessboard. He will do exactly as Meharry and Flint and the rest of them tell him. The bishop of the diocese has given him his blessing. As you know, Rosscommon is the accepted candidate of the Unionist party, and if these two fight it out I do not think Rosscommon will stand much chance. The Roman Catholic peasantry will be obedient to the priest's whip. Now is our chance. If a man comes forward who voices the national sentiment, and at the same time strikes a blow for freedom from priest rule, he will make a strong, a very strong appeal. He will gain votes in many directions. First, from those who long for justice to Ireland, but who, although they have not yet dared to say so, are longing for freedom from the domination of the priest. Second, from those who, although they dare not offend the Protestant gentry, long for something different from Rosscommon's programme. Third, from those who, although they are as yet completely dominated by the black-coated gentry, will, when they hear it, respond to a call to freedom and light.

"But we need a strong man, and if I may so put it, a special man. He must be a local man, he must be a rich man, he must be a Protestant, and he must be bold enough to dare the anger of his Protestant neighbours on the one hand and the wrath of the priests on the other.

"You, Denis Kildare, are the man.

"I know I am making a big demand on you. The Tyrone faction will hate you like poison, and you will be for ever an Ishmaelite as far as they are concerned. Meharry and his tribe will persecute you, and will try and make life unbearable for you. Indeed, I see dark clouds ahead in that direction. In a sense you will carry your life in your hands. The priests have tremendous power, and they will use it to the utmost, use it unscrupulously, and believe they are serving God by so doing.

"But it is God Almighty's work. The man who will fight this battle as you will fight it, will unloose forces which will mean, eventually, Ireland's salvation. You will set the people thinking, you will make them ask questions, you will sow the seeds of liberty, and more, you will arouse that 'white passion for liberty' which is the

sure precursor to a people's freedom. You will begin a work which will sweep over Ireland.

"This is a divine call.

"Come over to-night, and we will talk about it.

"Yours faithfully,

"PATRICK O'HARA."

Denis read the letter over many times, and at each perusal the appeal became stronger. The thought of the priests' anger did not daunt him; rather it made him long for the fray. His heart grew hot at the thought of fighting for a people's liberty. It appealed to those fighting instincts which are still cherished by men who have convictions. And he would be true to his convictions. He would show that he had not forsaken the Protestant flag; he was fighting for it. Of course he would be misunderstood; but that was nothing.

He went out into the grounds, still thinking over Pat O'Hara's proposal. Yes, it seemed like a call to duty; but he realised, as he had realised from the very first moment he had read it, that it would destroy for ever and ever all possibility of winning Lenore for his wife.

It was near noon when a servant came to seek him.

"Please, sir, a gentleman from England."

"Who can it be?" thought the young man as he found his way into the house. An old man rose to meet him.

"Is this Denis Kildare?"

"Yes," replied Denis, still wondering who his visitor could be.

"I am your grandfather," said the old man; "my name is Anthony Trevelyan."

## CHAPTER XXI

### CROSSING THE RUBICON

THE two men looked at each other steadily for some seconds without speaking again. Denis was too surprised to utter a word, while the old man seemed to be trying to make up his mind concerning his grandson.

Anthony Trevelyan looked as though he must be at least seventy years of age, but there was no suggestion of the old man about him. His eyes were bright, his voice firm and steady, his movements quick and decided. He was faultlessly dressed, his linen was spotlessly clean, and the silk hat which was placed on the table was carefully brushed. No one could help taking him for what he was, a gentleman of the old school. Eccentric, no doubt, and with perhaps many foibles, but still a gentleman.

As I said, he looked at Denis for some seconds without speaking; then he held out his hand. He had made up his mind.

"Denis, my boy," he said, "I'm very glad to see you."

Denis shook the proffered hand heartily. "It is good of you to come," he said.

Perhaps there was something in the young man's face that recalled old memories, for again he looked at his grandson steadily; then he suddenly drew the back of his hand across his eyes. They were moist.

"I am very glad to see you," he repeated presently. "Can you put me up for a day or two, my boy?"

"A day or two!" cried Denis. "A week, a month, a year!"

"No, thank you," said the old man quietly; "only a day or two."

Denis wondered afterwards at the unquestioning way in which he had received his grandfather. He had never

seen him before, and knew nothing about his personal appearance, but never a doubt had crossed his mind as to whether he were really his grandfather. Mrs. Tregonyn had sent him his mother's portrait, and he could not help associating the face of the dead woman with that of the old man.

"I wrote to you a day or so after I came here to thank you for all you had done for me," said Denis. "As you did not reply, I thought you didn't wish me to write you again."

"No," replied the old man quietly, "I did not wish you to write me again; there was no need. But I got your letter. I appreciated it."

Denis looked around the room awkwardly. He scarcely knew what to do with his guest.

"You would like a wash, wouldn't you?" he said, "I will ring and see that a room is got ready for you."

"Thank you. I shall be glad of the room of course, but I need nothing else. I stopped at Connella last night. It was at a miserable inn, but soap and water were provided." He paused a second, and then went on: "I have kept myself posted up in all the news about you."

"Mr. MacNiven has told you, I suppose?"

"Oh, no. I discovered that there was a paper called the *Connella Signal*, so I had it sent regularly. The editor must be thankful for you."

"I suppose I've provided him with a good deal of copy."

"Yes; I've been able to see the trend of things too."

"The trend of things?"

"Yes. Excuse me, I'm an open-air man. Shall we go outside."

They went out on the lawns, the old man showing by his quick glance that he was not blind to the beauty of the situation. Presently they came to a seat near a rose bed.

"I'm not tired, Denis," said the old man, "but shall we sit down?"

"Of course," said the young man, "if you like."

He did not know why it was, but in spite of what he had heard about his mother's father his heart warmed towards him. Moreover, in a way he could not explain, he was calmed by his presence. For many hours he

had been fighting a great battle, and his heart had been torn by conflicting emotions. But old Anthony Trevelyan calmed him, made him feel more at peace.

For some time they sat side by side without speaking, but the young man felt that the eyes of his grandfather were constantly upon him.

"I have been wondering," said Anthony Trevelyan presently, "whether I've treated you—justly. No, no; don't speak yet. I've concluded that I haven't. Besides, Denis, you are my only child's son. I loved her very much, although I am afraid I was hard with her. I like you, my boy; do you think you can find a place in your heart for your mother's father?"

There was a plaintive tone in the old man's voice, and his lips trembled. The young man's eyes filled with tears; he was strangely moved.

"Grandfather!" he said, and he held out his hands.

He only uttered the one word, but it seemed enough. Anthony Trevelyan's eyes sparkled, and then became dim. His lips quivered too, and Denis thought he trembled. But he quickly mastered himself, and in a few seconds spoke quite naturally.

"I am getting an old man," he said quietly; "not that I am not hale and hearty, but still the years are creeping on. I've been a bit lonely lately, and I've wanted—I am very glad to see you, Denis."

"I would have come to you directly I knew you were my grandfather, if I had dared," replied the young man; "but I thought you didn't want me."

"I would like to see your home, Denis," said old Anthony presently. "My daughter—your mother lived here."

For an hour they wandered over the house and the grounds, the old man quietly observant of everything. Denis was naturally proud of his home, proud of the position it gave him. Although they had never seen each other before, he could not think of his grandfather as a stranger; indeed he spoke to him as though he had known him all his life.

The time was now early September, and the weather was delightfully warm. The glory of summer was beginning to fade, but the landscape looked beautiful nevertheless.

And Anthony Trevelyan was not slow to recognise the glory of the country. Towards evening they went for a long walk together.

"I made a vow once that I would never put foot on Irish soil," said the old man after lunch. "It was a foolish vow. I am glad I broke it."

"I am glad too," said Denis, "more glad than words can say."

"Thank you, my boy. By the way, I've made it impossible for John and Mary Tregony to ever come to want."

"So have I," said Denis.

The old man laughed quietly, but his eyes became humid again as he looked at his grandson. It was evident that Anthony Trevelyan was much pleased with his reception; the young man's presence had softened the hard crust of his nature.

"Denis," he said presently, "can you think of me as your—your mother's father?"

"Yes," replied the young man quietly.

"I wonder then if you can trust me?"

Denis looked at him questioningly.

"I have realised during the last few weeks that the great mistake of my life has been that I have been too distant to those I loved," went on Anthony. "As a consequence I have been misunderstood, and I have been very lonely. Realising my mistake I determined to come and see you; and since I have been here I have learnt in a very forcible way that blood is thicker than water. My heart has gone out to you, my lad. Forgive me; I haven't said as much as this to anyone for nearly thirty years."

"I am so glad, grandfather," said Denis.

"Are you? That is well. I wonder if you can trust me, my boy?"

"Yes."

"Then tell me all about it."

For some time a silence fell between them, for Denis did not know how to answer his grandfather's request. He did not resent it in the slightest; it seemed natural and right.

"I used to say," went on Anthony Trevelyan, "that

I would never seek any man's confidences, and I fancy that in a general way I was right. All the same, I sometimes think that if I had given your mother the chance of opening her heart to me, she might have been with me even yet. At any rate I should have saved her from——” He ceased speaking, and his eyes wandered away in the direction of Sir Charles Tyrone's house. “ Denis, my boy, something is troubling you. Tell me all about it.”

Denis never thought of asking how he knew; he instinctively felt the link of sympathy between them, and perhaps the knowledge that the old man had looked into his heart made him more willing to confide in him.

“ It will take a long time to tell,” he said.

“ And I am a good listener. Try me, my dear boy.”

And Denis told his story, while the old man listened—with a strange light in his eyes and a puckered sort of smile on his lips. Never once did he interrupt or ask a question. He seemed to have a wonderful way of understanding things.

“ And that is all ? ” asked old Anthony, after Denis had told of his experiences the previous day.

“ I promised to let her know before I slept to-night,” said Denis.

For some time after this neither spoke; but it was evident that both were thinking deeply.

“ Ireland is the grave of many hopes,” said Anthony presently. “ Its history seems to be the history of broken hearts.”

“ I love it,” replied Denis simply.

“ Have you told me all, my boy ? ”

“ All except this,” he said, handing him Pat O'Hara's letter. “ It came this morning. I was trying to decide how to answer it when the news of your arrival came to me this morning.”

Anthony Trevelyan read the old Irishman's letter—read it slowly and carefully, and then when he had finished read it a second time.

“ Tell me about this Pat O'Hara,” he said, and Denis told him.

“ Of course you've made up your mind,” said old Anthony.

Denis shook his head.

"Oh, yes, you have. There's only one thing an honest man can do. He must follow his convictions, although he may have been convinced in the wrong way."

"You mean that I must go and see Pat, that I shall do what he asks me?"

"Yes, I mean that."

And Denis knew that his grandfather was right, although his heart was like lead. Anthony Trevelyan watched his grandson's face closely, while a great pity came into his eyes. It was wonderful how unlike Mr. Russell's description of him this old man was. But that was not to be wondered at. Anthony Trevelyan knew that the day had rolled many years from his heart. His grandson's love had put back the hand on the dial of his life; he felt like a young man again.

"Then you advise——"

"I advise nothing, my boy. You know the situation. In spite of yourself, you have, rightly or wrongly, been led to believe that the land of your birth can only be served in one way. You believe, too, that you have been called to take your part in its salvation. Admitting that, there is nothing to be said."

"But she is convinced too."

"Yes; but her convictions do not affect your love for her. You would marry her whatever she believed?"

"Yes."

"Denis, my boy," said the old man drily, "depend upon it the love of a girl who will give up a man because he can't think as she thinks, is a very poor affair. It's hardly worth having. Don't be angry, my lad; old men sometimes have keener eyes than young ones."

Denis was silent for a few seconds, then he said:

"You think she does not care for me?"

"Ask yourself, my boy; ask your own heart. You feel strongly on this question; but the fact that she feels just as strongly on the other side does not alter your affections, does not make you say that unless she changes her mind all must be over between you."

Denis's eyes became hard. He admitted the logic of his grandfather's words, although he felt that a great deal was left unsaid.

"I should like to go with you to-night and see this

old man, this Pat O'Hara," said Anthony Trevelyan presently. Then he added: "I fancy you want to be alone for a little while, and so do I."

A little later Denis sat alone in the library writing to Lenore Tyrone. His heart was sad beyond words, but in his eyes was a look of steady resolve. As Anthony Trevelyan had said, his mind was made up. He might be wrong, or he might be right, but there was only one course of action open to him.

"Since yesterday," he wrote, "one question has faced me, and because my life's happiness depends on the answer I give to it my heart has been as though it were on a rack. I cannot think as you think, Lenore, and I cannot be an idle spectator. I feel I have been called to labour on behalf of self-government for this unhappy land, and I have decided to respond to the call. I do this because I love Ireland, and because I am a Protestant. The very genius of my Protestant faith is liberty, responsibility. If Ireland were Protestant and demanded self-government, the demand would not be opposed. It is because the country is in the main Romanist that her demand has been opposed. Can I, as a Protestant, believing in liberty and responsibility for the individual, deny that liberty to my fellow countrymen because they are largely Romanist? I cannot.

"As you know, I believe that the general effect of self-government is emancipating, liberating.

"I believe that self-government will in time lead the people to throw off the shackles of Rome. Rome never could and never will be able to hold her own against a free people.

"Let the people feel that they are governing their own country, and their intelligence will be awakened and their judgment asserted. They will throw off their swaddling clothes; they will emerge into liberty and light. Then the reign of Rome will be over.

"You have urged that self-government for Ireland would mean that the Protestant minority would be perpetually dominated by the Romanists; and this would mean intolerance, bigotry, and persecution.

"My answer is this: In no *free* country can you have the permanent majority of any party, and freedom is

the only sure antidote for bigotry, for intolerance. Ireland needs the opportunity to work out her own salvation, and this will be done, not by governing her according to English ideas, but by allowing her to govern herself.

"Forgive me for saying this, for I know that argument is useless. All the same, I feel it due to myself to be able to give my reasons for the faith that is in me."

"But, Lenore, I have been sorely tempted to cast my convictions to the wind for love of you. I remembered your words, and all my heart is gone out to you. Still, to yield to the temptation would mean that for the rest of my life I should despise myself. And you would despise me too."

"And now I have told you what you have the right to know. But, Lenore, need this separate us? The fact that you think differently from me would not make me entertain for a moment the thought of rejecting your love. I love you so much that my heart laughs at such a thing. Is not your love for me great enough to overrule differences of opinion?"

"I have tried to write calmly, although my heart seems torn in twain. Lenore, although we cannot see alike on this question, and I cannot deny my convictions, I would devote my life to you. Surely our love for each other is great enough to laugh at these things and rise above them."

What he wrote besides I will not set down, for at this point Denis forgot to argue; he pleaded as only a young man can plead, and it seemed to him as though he were writing with his own blood.

He sent a messenger with this letter, and then after a walk with his grandfather they motored over to Rathsheen.

"You've written your letter?" said Anthony Trevelyan.

"Yes."

"That is well. You will now be free to give your heart to—everything else."

"For the time," said Denis, "I do not feel as though I had any heart to give."

"But you have," said the old man; "you have."

Evidently Pat O'Hara expected Denis, for he stood at the gate as though awaiting him, but he looked at Anthony Trevelyan as though in doubt.

"This is my grandfather, Mr. O'Hara," he said: "my mother's father."

"I knew your daughter, sir," said old Pat; "she was a beautiful girl."

"Yes, she was," replied Anthony Trevelyan.

When they entered the house Rosaleen met Denis with gladsome eyes.

"If you hadn't come I should have been heart-broken," she said, "for it would have meant that you had elected to go over to the other side."

"Does Mr. Trevelyan know what I want you to do, Mr. Kildare," asked Pat.

"I have read the letter you sent him," replied Anthony.

"His answer to it means a great deal to me, sir, and more to Ireland," and there was a defiant ring in his voice. It sounded as though the old man was armed for battle. "It would be interesting," he added presently, "how after your conversation with your grandson, for I have no doubt you have discussed the question, how it strikes you—an Englishman?"

A few minutes later Anthony Trevelyan had revealed himself to his grandson in a new light. He began by saying that he despised politics as a mere game of grab, and then proceeded to put a series of questions to the old Irishman which showed Denis that he had studied the question thoroughly.

"One thing I cannot understand, Mr. O'Hara," said Anthony after a while.

"And that, sir?"

"How one holding your views can be a Roman Catholic?"

"The priests hate me," said old Pat grimly.

"But you say you are a Roman Catholic."

"Mr. Trevelyan, I am an old man. I was born and reared a Catholic, as all my people have been Catholics for many generations."

"And yet it seems to me that you are the greatest enemy that priestcraft has in this district."

"That is because I want Ireland to be free. The priests want to keep the people in subjection to their rule, and I, because I long to see them free from that subjection, have—done what I have done. Of course I have been cursed by

bell, book, and candle, and the faithful have been warned against me. Still I hold fast by the faith of my fathers."

"Interpreting that faith in your own way."

"Man is a curious animal, Mr. Trevelyan," laughed old Pat. "With my mind I laugh at priestly pretensions and claims, but the blood of many generations of Catholics is in my veins, therefore I am what I am. All the same, I fight the priests, because I know that liberty is the breath of life, and what Ireland needs is liberty."

There was silence for a few seconds, and then Pat turned to Denis.

"Well, Kildare," he said, "what is your answer?"

"My answer is Yes," said Denis.

Rosaleen came towards him, her eyes aflame. "The saints be praised!" she cried; "we'll work for you night and day. And you'll win—you'll win!"

"I don't think that's the question," said Denis. He did not seem to be aware that Rosaleen stood before him with hands outstretched. He was looking on the floor. His voice was husky, he felt as though he had been signing his own death warrant.

"Have you counted the cost, my lad?" said old Pat, and there was a tremor in his voice.

"Yes."

"All your Protestant friends will close their doors on you. They will regard you as a traitor to your country and to your religion."

"Yes, I know that; but I shall fight this fight because I love my country, and because I am a Protestant."

"You'll be very lonely," went on Pat; "you'll be looked upon as an enemy by both Nationalist and Unionist. Excepting Rosaleen and myself you'll not have any of your own class to stand by you. The press will be against you, because the press is controlled by the priests; the Protestants will be against you; and of course the Church will be against you."

"Yes, I know," cried Denis; "I've thought it all out."

"Perhaps your life will be in danger," added the old man.

"Very likely; but we'll have a good fight all the same," and there was grim determination in his voice.

Old Anthony Trevelyan looked at his grandson proudly.

The fighting instinct was strong in the old Cornishman's heart.

"A man is coming here from the *Connella Signal* in an hour's time," went on Pat. "I told him three days ago that very likely an independent candidate would appear. He was very curious to know who it would be. I suppose I may tell him?"

"Of course."

"I have a plan of campaign all sketched out," said Pat; "what do you think of it?"

He handed Denis a piece of paper as he spoke, which the young man read eagerly.

"I agree," he said. "We must have our first meeting at Connella next Monday night."

"You'll be denounced in every church in the constituency on Sunday."

"I suppose so."

"You must expect a great deal of rowdyism and uproar."

"I suppose so." Denis had all an Englishman's hatred of noisy scenes, but the look of steady resolve in his eyes never changed. He had not consented to fight the battle without first counting the cost.

For the next hour they debated every aspect of the question, until every detail was clear in the young man's mind.

"Do you think there's any chance of winning?" asked old Anthony Trevelyan.

Rosaleen looked at her grandfather's face eagerly, but the old man gave no sign.

"No," said Denis, "we shall not win."

"Oh, but you will," cried Rosaleen, "you will! I will canvass every house in the constituency myself. And the people know me, love me, and they will do what I ask them. Besides, granddad will speak for you, and everyone knows granddad; and—and oh, I know you will win!"

The girl's words ended in a sob, which was half a laugh. "I know you'll win!" she repeated.

"And the priests will go to every house," said Denis; "we must not forget that. And they do not love me."

A servant knocked as he spoke, and a minute later a young man was shown in.

"I've come from the *Connella Signal*, Mr. O'Hara," he said. "You said I might call to-night."

"Yes," replied the old Irishman; "any news?"

"Tim Geary, the member for the Connella District, is dead," replied the young man.

There was a silence for a few seconds, then old Pat said: "God rest Tim Geary's soul; but that was an Irish bull, Mike, my lad. If he's dead, he's not the member for Connella."

"Faith and that's what I came about, Mr. O'Hara," cried the young fellow; "for though he's dead, there's plenty who would like to be in his shoes. But we haven't had a contest for many a long day, and it's a great time we're going to have. Mr. Rosscommon is in Connella this very night, and I was told that within an hour of Tim Geary's death Peter Luggan was at the house of Father Flanagan."

"Where the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together," said Anthony Trevelyan.

"Even as I left Connella," went on the reporter, "people were saying in the public-houses that you had someone up your sleeve."

Pat held up both arms. "I see no one," he said.

"But, Mr. O'Hara, will you tell me if ye know of a third candidate?"

"Yes," said Pat. "He's there," and he nodded towards Denis.

"What, Mr. Kildare! Tell me, is it true, Mr. Kildare?" and the young fellow's voice trembled with excitement.

"Yes," replied Denis quietly.

A few minutes later the reporter was rapidly returning to Connella.

"I'm thinking there'll be bloody doin's," he muttered; "but it's a godsend to the *Signal*. And we shall be first with the news too, for the *Express* just knows nothin'. And it's a slashin' article I'll write too, for all Father Flanagan may say."

The next day the *Connella Signal* had an unusually large sale, for it recorded events unprecedented in the history of the constituency. Not only was there to be a contest, but there was to be a three-cornered fight, while one of the

candidates was no less a person than the young Squire Kildare.

Lenore sat alone in the drawing-room at Clonnell, with a book open before her. But she was not reading. She had not turned a page during the last half-hour. More than once during the day she had read the letter Denis Kildare had sent to her the evening before. She knew the latter part of it by heart, but she had turned to it again and again, nevertheless. She had sent no answer.

Her father entered the room hurriedly.

"Look!" he cried excitedly. "Here is the *Connella Signal*. See what it says!" and he pointed to a paragraph which was especially prominent.

"You see," cried Sir Charles, "he's going to fight against Stephen. The traitor!"

The girl did not speak, but her face was pale to the lips.

"Of course Pat O'Hara is supporting him. I could not have believed it possible that he would have made a friend of this old wretch. But there, we've been mistaken."

Still the girl did not speak.

"You see he's announced a meeting for Monday night at Connella. No wonder the young rascal refused Sir William when he was here. I expect he's had a secret arrangement with old Pat all the time. Well, I'll see to it that he shall never darken the doors of this house again."

Evidently Sir Charles was very angry.

"There's a leading article on it—don't you see?" went on the baronet. "Of course the paper supports Peter Luggan, but the article admits that a third candidate will take away votes from him. Well, on the whole, I'm glad. We know exactly what the fellow is now, and Stephen will have a better chance. And we'll have to work all the harder for Stephen, won't we?"

"Yes," replied Lenore.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE

THE *Connella Signal* was a bi-weekly production. The number which had caused Sir Charles Tyrone to be so excited and angry appeared on a Wednesday. On Thursday the little town of Connella was wild with excitement; and although no meetings were to be held until the late member's funeral was over, both Peter Luggan and Stephen Rosscommon had arranged to address their followers on the Saturday. Mr. Geary's funeral took place on the Friday afternoon, and on Friday evening every place where a bill could be posted was covered. Luggan had secured the public hall, while Stephen Rosscommon had arranged to hold his meeting in the Episcopalian schoolroom. Huge bills also appeared stating that Denis Kildare would speak at the public hall on the following Monday, and that the chair would be taken by Pat O'Hara.

The coming strife was discussed everywhere, and feeling ran very high. All the Roman Catholic clergy in the district supported Luggan, the Protestant clergy and gentry supported Rosscommon, while Denis was left alone as far as the Churches were concerned. Still, his candidature was treated seriously. The fact that he was standing at Pat O'Hara's request was a fact of considerable significance, and although he had been in the district only a few months, he had made himself popular by many kindly deeds, and the fact of his being a Kildare of Kildare Castle added great interest to the situation.

Although feeling ran high, however, the utmost good feeling prevailed until Saturday. The fight had not yet really begun, and no angry passions had been aroused. On Saturday, however, not only the *Connella Signal*, but the *Connella Express* appeared, both of which were

characterised by very strongly worded articles. Added to this, Saturday was market-day at Connella, and people had come to the little town from all the country round about. At every corner were groups of people discussing the situation, while the spiciest selections from the papers were being read.

There had been no election in Connella for some years. Mr. Geary had taken his seat again and again without opposition ; and beyond the fact that he had gone to Westminster to vote for Home Rule the people took no direct interest in him. The fact of a contest, therefore, gave new zest to the life of the people. The last occasion on which there had been an election was in Parnell's days, and there had been rioting and bloodshed. It is true that a polling took place, but the Unionist candidate did not dare to show his face. His life, so it was said, would not have been worth an hour's purchase if he had. The consequence was that Mr. Geary was returned by an overwhelming majority, and no Unionist candidate had dared to stand since. But a change had come over the district since then. Many of the people had, during the last few years, become somewhat discontented with Mr. Geary, and a division had arisen in the Nationalist camp. Pat O'Hara had urged that the Connella Division needed a representative who was not a mere echo of the Roman clergy, and Pat had a large following. Added to this, a number of farmers had become very cold on the question of Home Rule. Some of them had, under the Land Purchase Act, become practically possessors of their farms ; and as they were on the way to becoming prosperous, they were not anxious for a change of Government. The great mass of the people, however, were expected to support Peter Luggan, simply because he was the priests' nominee.

On the Saturday night, both the public hall and the Episcopal schoolroom were crowded, and the wildest enthusiasm prevailed. Another meeting had been held earlier in the day, however, which was of more importance than either of the two public gatherings. This was a meeting of priests in Father Flanagan's house. No detailed report of this meeting was made, but certain facts leaked out. It appeared that Father Meharry had paid a visit to a notable ecclesiastic, and that this ecclesiastic had

expressed very strong doubts as to the advisability of the Romanist clergy taking part in the contest. Indeed, he had gone further. He had declared that it was a very questionable matter as to whether Home Rule would be good for the Church, and that more than one bishop wished that the question could be buried.

"What!" asked Father Mehaberry, "do you mean to say you do not believe in Home Rule?"

"I have my doubts about it," said the ecclesiastic. "The truth is this: I do not see how, under any form of government the Church could be better off than it is. Dublin Castle plays into our hands. The education of the country is controlled by us, and the State pays for it. The British Government pays for the training of Catholic teachers; it pays for the training of Catholic priests; in short, it pays for practically everything, while we, the clergy, practically rule everything."

"But the people are clamouring for self-government," said Father Mehaberry. "If they do not get it, and we do not help them to get it, they will blame us, and our influence over them will be lessened. On the other hand, if Ireland has Home Rule we shall be able to dictate the policy of the Dublin Parliament."

"For a while we may," said the ecclesiastic, "but free Parliaments have never been of advantage to the Church. Give the democracy power and the tendency is for it to break away from authority."

It appears that many other things were said on these lines, and Father Mehaberry was coming back to Connella with instructions that all the clergy should refrain from taking part in the election, when the parish priest mentioned another factor which completely changed the great ecclesiastic's views.

"You have to bear this in mind," said Mehaberry. "Peter Luggan is a faithful Catholic; he will do our bidding in everything. If it were simply to be a fight between him and Rosscommon, I think we should be wise to let things take their own course. But we must remember that Pat O'Hara has persuaded young Kildare to be a third candidate; and Kildare is lost to the Church. You know the history of the affair, so I need not repeat it. Kildare is a dangerous man."

"How?"

"He is a clever speaker. He will make a strong appeal to the popular sentiment, and will advocate the policy that Irish affairs shall be settled by an Irish Parliament; and that, as you know, is what we Catholic priests have been pleading for all along. But he will go further. He will advocate opposition to our authority; he will create an anti-clerical party, and you know what an anti-clerical party would mean in Ireland."

The ecclesiastic looked grave. "This is what I have feared all along," he said presently. "No one would advocate Home Rule more strongly than I, but for the fear that it would open the door to anti-clericalism."

"There is no fear of it, while we choose the members of the Irish Parliament," said Meharry; "and that is why I think Kildare must be put down with a strong hand."

I do not profess that the above is a verbatim report of the conversation which took place, but it is undoubtedly a fact that its purport is correct. Thus it came about that the priests decided to take very little notice of Rosscommon, whose candidature was not considered dangerous, but to spare no effort to crush Denis Kildare.

It came to pass therefore that practically all the Romanist clergy in the district were on Peter Luggan's platform, while Father Flanagan took the chair. As I have said, the hall was crowded, and Father Flanagan was in great fighting form.

After paying his tribute to the deceased member as a good Catholic, and a true friend to Ireland, he spoke very highly as to the good qualities of Peter Luggan. He also was a good Catholic, and he also would fight for the religion, and for Ireland. As a consequence it was their duty to send him to Parliament with a triumphant majority.

"I'll admit," said Father Flanagan, "that our task is more difficult than it has been in past years. If we only had Rosscommon to deal with we would quickly send him about his business. You've read his address, and know his policy. He's an Englishman at heart, and cares nothing for Ireland. He would keep us under the heel of England, and he denies our right to be a nation. He insults us by saying we are not fit for self-government. He is the nominee of the Protestant landlords, who hate our Church,

and who don't care a straw for the ould counthry. Gentlemen, we will have nothing to do with a man who's ready to lick the Englishmen's boots."

At this there was great cheering. It was evident that Father Flanagan had expressed the prevailing sentiments of the audience.

"But we have another candidate," he said, "and he is a horse of a different colour. Gentlemen, it's very unpleasant to say hard things about a Kildare, but we must remember that while his father was Irish, his mother was English, and a Protestant. This man is a traitor. He's a traitor to his faith, he's an enemy to the religion."

At this there was a great deal of cheering, but it was not general. Evidently there were some who did not share the chairman's feelings.

"It is true," went on Father Flanagan, "that he professes to love Ireland, and he advocates Ireland having self-government, but that's only a boot to cover the cloven foot. He's the nominee of a man who's an enemy to Ireland's truest friends."

Again there was some cheering, but not enough to please Father Flanagan.

"I repeat, he's an enemy to Ireland's truest friends," he cried vehemently. "And who are Ireland's truest friends? Why, the priests. Who have stood by the people during famine and oppression and persecution? I say, the priests. They do not come from homes of luxury like the Protestant ministers, but from the cottages of the people; they comfort you in your sorrows, help you in your troubles, advise you in your difficulties, and comfort you in the hour of death. And this man, this Denis Kildare, the child of many generations of Catholics, would have you shake your fists in our faces. This man is a rabid Protestant, an enemy to the Church; and this is the man you must fight."

At this some man in the audience shouted, "Question!" at which the audience turned to see who had dared to speak.

"Who said 'Question'?" cried Father Flanagan. "Oh, don't think I don't know who you are! It's come to this, has it, that a man in my own parish dares to interrupt me when I'm speaking? Was it Jim Murphy, or Tom

Flynn, or Mike Flaherty? Oh, I see you all. Shall I mention the name of the man who rudely interrupted me, and have him turned out of the meeting? No, I won't; I'll just leave him to his own conscience, but I'll keep him in my eyes. Now, then, let the man who cried 'Question' stand up like a man, and not stay behind the door like the coward he is. No one stands up? No, he dare not. And that's the kind of man who'll vote for this enemy of Ireland."

The remainder of the chairman's speech was an attack on Denis, and every sentence tended to incite the people to anger against him. Peter Luggan and the other speakers who followed took up the same strain. Indeed it was evident that all the weapons of battle were to be devoted against the young squire of Kildare.

A vote was taken adopting Peter Luggan as their candidate, and promising to support him. Altogether it was a fairly quiet meeting. Father Flanagan, however, aroused feelings to a very high pitch when he in response to a vote of thanks to the chairman for his pre-eminently fair and impartial conduct in the chair, gave expression to some strong sentiments.

"I say this," he cried vehemently, "and I say it realising my responsibility, that it is your bounden duty to support our friend Peter Luggan; and if you dare to vote for Kildare you'll have to answer for it at the day of judgment."

At Stephen Rosscommon's meeting the speeches against Denis's candidature were quite as strong, although couched in different language. The audience was small compared with the other, for although the room was crowded it was not large, but the feeling against the young squire was unmistakable. He was regarded as a traitor to England, and to the Protestant religion. Altogether the young man's prospects looked black.

Still, there was a great crowd at the public hall on the following Monday night. It was hinted that the priests exerted some influence to keep Denis from having the use of the hall; but the authorities declared that they could not go back on their word. The truth was, there was a great desire to hear what he had to say. Besides, Pat O'Hara was to be his chairman, and Pat's influence was great. Many of the people who dared not openly oppose priest

rule were longing for someone to appear who was brave enough to defy them. They had suffered in silence, because they dared not speak, but the fires of passion were smouldering. They treated Rosscommon with contempt, because he stood no chance of election, and because he opposed what was dear to them. But Denis was different. In his address he had voiced the Irish sentiment, and he dared to defy clericalism.

Half a dozen priests found their way into the hall, and took care to occupy positions whereby they could command a good view of the audience. Many noted this, and knew that if they held up their hands for Denis, or showed any signs of approval of his sentiments, they would be marked men. In their hearts they resented their own fears, but they dared not try and break their chains. As a consequence there was almost dead silence when old Pat O'Hara mounted the platform. They wanted to cheer, but were afraid. Neither did Denis, who followed Pat, receive a warm welcome, while old Anthony Trevelyan and John Grubb were practically unnoticed. No sooner did these men take their seats, however, than the audience broke into wild cheering, for close behind them came Rosaleen O'Hara, her eyes shining with excitement and her face wreathed in smiles.

"It's Mistress Rosaleen," they cried; "it's Mistress Rosaleen. Give her another cheer!"

It was no wonder the audience shouted, for surely such a picture of beauty was seldom seen. Priest or no priest they could not resist the flash of her great black eyes or her roguish smile. To them she was the spirit of young Ireland, the spirit of beauty and truth. For years she had been the friend to the poorest, and there was not one who knew her that did not love her.

"God bless ye, Miss Rosaleen!" cried one.

"Ay, but we'd send ye to Parlyment if they'd only let us," cried another.

She stood on the platform before the crowded audience, clad in Irish homespun, but her dress and hat were trimmed in green; and plain though her attire was, everything she wore seemed to enhance her beauty.

"Give us a speech, Miss Rosaleen, give us a speech," someone cried.

At this the cheering was louder than ever, and even the priests laughed and joined in the applause. After all, nine out of every ten of them were simple-minded peasants, and Connella was only a little obscure Irish town, and they knew little or nothing of the ways of the world.

She pulled a bunch of something green from her dress.

"Do you know what this is?" she asked with a laugh.

"It's the Irish green," cried one.

"It's a bunch of shamrock," shouted another.

"A bunch of shamrock it is," she said, still laughing.  
"It's the emblem of 'ould Ireland.'"

"Yes, yes, it is," the people shouted.

"And you are all Irishmen?"

"Yes, yes," they shouted again.

"Then because you are Irishmen, you're going to give fair play to every speaker. For, faith, I'll be ashamed av ye, if ye're not true to Ireland and give fair play to all."

"We, will, we will," many shouted.

"But give us a speech," persisted someone.

"If ye give all the speakers fair play, I'll speak at the end of the meeting," and again there was wild cheering.

It did not seem at all strange that she should have done this. Her manner, her voice, her every movement were as artless as though she were still a child, as indeed she was, although her woman's heart was beginning to awake.

Of course old Pat O'Hara spoke first, and it was soon evident that he had either lost his power over the people or they dared not evince any approval of what he said. No man in the country knew the Irish temperament better; no man was able to enter more into the fears and hopes, the loves and hates of the people more fully. But he failed to arouse them to anything like enthusiasm. Now and then a cheer was evoked, but it was quickly stifled. Doubtless the people felt that the eyes of the priests were upon them. He had an attentive hearing, but the attitude of the audience was sullen and suspicious. Of course Rosaleen's presence helped him; indeed it is to be doubted whether there would not have been open revolt but for what she had done.

"There's something wrong," said Pat to Denis as he sat down. "I was never met like this before. It is evident

the priests have been among the people and frightened them."

Denis had no time to reply, for he was the next speaker, and it was Pat's duty to announce him.

Scarcely a cheer greeted the young man as he rose to speak, although excitement was in the air. It was not like an Irish meeting at all. Never since Rosaleen sat down had there been anything like a hearty laugh. There were no quips, no jokes, no repartee. On the faces of many of the people there was a look of sullen anger, in the eyes of others there was fear. But they were quiet, watchful, attentive. There was no suggestion of rowdyism, and no evidence that the people had been partaking too freely of whisky. More than once while Pat had been speaking it seemed that some of the audience wanted to cheer him, but fear kept them from doing so.

Still, the young man met the situation quietly and courageously. The silent opposition aroused the fighting instincts of his nature, and the joy of battle came into his heart. Doubtless, too, his youthful appearance and felicity of speech helped him, for before he had been speaking five minutes a kindlier spirit was manifest. At the end of ten minutes old Pat's face was wreathed with smiles, while Rosaleen's eyes burned with joy. Denis possessed that gift of oratory for which the Celt is famous, and although he was unaccustomed to speaking to such an audience he gripped their attention and held it. Nay more, he aroused the people to enthusiasm. He spoke of Irish history, told of its heroes, its saints, its statesmen. He dwelt on the longings, the hopes, and the rights of the Irish people. He appealed to their spirit of romance and their love for their native land. And it was because he wanted them to be happy, contented, prosperous, in their own land, that he had occupied the position he occupied that night.

No man loves oratory more than Irishmen, no race possesses it to a greater degree, and Denis proved himself to be an orator worthy of his race. He made the people to see as he saw, to feel as he felt. He voiced the feelings which longed for expression, and as if by magic he destroyed the antagonism which doubtless existed when first he had risen to his feet.

" You are our man, Mr. Kildare," cried a voice presently,

and many, carried away by their feelings, cheered enthusiastically. The priests looked at each other angrily. Evidently things were not turning out as they had expected.

"He's no true Irishman," shouted one of them presently. "He's a traitor. All the Kildares have been Catholics, and this man is an enemy to the faith. No true Irishman, no true Catholic will dare to support him."

Denis met the interrupter quietly. He showed no perturbation, no anger ; but his eyes flashed nevertheless, and perhaps his voice had a more decided ring. Perhaps the interrupter was sorry for what he had done, for in a few minutes the meeting was wild with enthusiasm. He said no direct word about priestcraft, nor criticised any form of religion, but the priests writhed nevertheless. After the interruption his speech was a clarion call to liberty. It asserted the inalienable right of every man to think for himself, judge for himself, act for himself. He made them feel that their greatest enemies were those who would put fetters on their minds, their souls.

"I was reared in a country," he cried, "where men will allow no man to dictate to them, be he parson, squire, or priest. Their fathers won their right to be free amidst persecution and strife and bloodshed. It is their heritage, and they would rather die than forfeit it. Fellow countrymen, this is our inalienable right, and it is the secret of progress of manhood. It is for that freedom I would fight."

He quoted the closing lines of Julia Ward Howes' famous battle hymn ; and because every Irishman is at heart a poet, the audience caught its meaning and responded to it with a mighty shout.

"In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me.  
As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free  
While God is marching on!"

Again the priests turned angrily towards each other. Denis had uttered no word which they could say was an attack on themselves or their religion, but they felt that every sentence was a blow to their claims and to their authority. Again one of them rose and interrupted.

"I say again, that this man is an enemy to Ireland, and to the faith!" he cried. "He said only two days ago that the

decrees of the Church were born in hell. Fellow Catholics, will ye stand that?"

At this there was wild tumult, and for some time it was impossible for Denis to speak. At length, however, silence was partially restored, and he tried to resume his speech. But this he found impossible.

"Answer Father Flint," they cried. "Did ye say that the decrees of Holy Church were born in hell?"

"I made up my mind to avoid discussing the differences between Catholics and Protestants," he replied. "I want to fight for the rights of the Irish people, and I have no wish to cause strife between Catholic and Protestant."

"Coward!" cried a priest. "He daren't stand by his own words. All this fine talk is so much disguised atheism. Look here, sir, did ye or did ye not say this?"

"I did not say the words which the gentleman here used."

"Liar!" cried the priest; "I had it from the lips of one who heard you say it in your own house."

"I have not been correctly reported," replied Denis.

"Then what *did* ye say?" retorted the priest. "Tell us that!"

"He dare not!" cried another. "He's just a wind-bag, and a coward."

Again there was a great noise, but presently, when it had somewhat subsided, Denis repeated his assertion that the statement was not true, and he did not wish to enter into a discussion on religious differences; it would be better not to enlarge on the accusation that had been made.

"Coward! Coward!" shouted the priests. "He's both a liar and a coward. He makes a false statement and then shirks it like the coward he is!"

At this Denis's eyes flashed with anger; nevertheless he stood patiently while the most insulting epithets were hurled at him.

"Listen to me, and I'll tell you what I did say," he cried as soon as he could make himself heard.

"Yes, tell us, tell us," came shouts from all over the hall.

"I would not have enlarged on this but for the challenge of these ministers of the gospel of peace," said Denis. "I was anxious to avoid anything that should

arouse bitter feelings, but after what has been said, I cannot be silent."

As if by magic a silence which was almost painful settled on the audience. Pat O'Hara looked very grave, while Rosaleen's face became as pale as death. Denis looked calmer than any man in the room.

" You have all heard of the Murphy case," he said. " Jim Murphy, a Roman Catholic lad, married Kitty Macfarlane, a Protestant girl, in a Presbyterian church in Cork. For years they lived happily as man and wife, and had children born to them. Some of you who are here know what a happy couple they were. Everyone respected them. Then a priest came from Cork and told them that they were not married at all; that the *Ne Temere* decree declared, that if a Catholic was married to a Protestant — otherwise than by a Roman Catholic priest there was no true marriage. He told them that they were living in sin, and that their children were children of shame. That is matter of fact, and no one denies it. Since then that woman has had her children stolen from her, while her husband has, at the command of the Church, left her, and she is now without her children, without her husband. She is left desolate because of this decree of the Church. I have seen the woman, and heard her story: one of the saddest stories any man can hear. Does anyone deny this ? "

" The woman had only to consent to be properly married, and there would have been no trouble," retorted one of the priests.

" Yes ; but what respectable woman would consent to be married a second time to the same man ? " cried Denis. " What good true woman would tacitly admit that she had for years been living a life of shame ? What would any respectable Roman Catholic mother in Connella say if a Protestant minister were to come to her, and tell her what that priest told Kitty Murphy ? For my part I honour the girl for her courage, and I will help her in every way I can. And now I will come to what I said. I was discussing this matter in my own house on Saturday night, and I said that the whole case was iniquitous, and that a decree that ruined the lives of people in such a way was an abomination in the sight of God. I said, too, that one day, when Ireland had thrown off the fear of the priests, the

people would make such a thing impossible. And I say it still."

Before Denis had finished the sentence an angry roar filled the hall, while a number of men rushed towards the platform with mad passion in their eyes and with cursing and threats on their lips.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ROSALEEN MAKES A SPEECH

IF ever a man's life was in danger, Denis's was in danger at that moment. There is no fury as violent as religious fury, no hatred as deadly as that which is inspired by religious bigotry. Without doubt the priests had been working on the religious prejudices of many in the audience, and the opposition had been arranged to destroy, at the outset of the election, any chance which Denis might have had of being returned to Parliament. These Irish peasants, who under ordinary circumstances were kind and sunny-hearted, had been aroused by the clerics to a mad frenzy. They had been led to look at the priests as having supernatural powers, and had been taught that the voice of the Church was the voice of God. And they were a wild people, who under the stress of excitement would do deeds which in their calmer moments would be unthought of.

Still Denis did not flinch. He watched the mêlée beneath him, and knew what it meant. But he had been warned at the beginning that his election would be no child's play ; he knew what the man who opposed priestcraft might expect. He stood erect on the platform therefore, and saw a number of big brawny men rushing towards him. But their progress was slow. The hall was packed, and many resented the uproar. The bulk of the audience was Roman Catholic, but they had been moved by the young man's fervid oratory. Many of them, Romanist as they were, sympathised with poor Kitty Murphy ; and while they had a sort of feeling that the Church might be right, they also felt a sullen hatred of the decree which meant so much misery. In a way they could not explain Denis's words seemed like a blow for liberty.

Still they dared to do nothing. They knew that the eyes

of the priests were upon them; and after all, the young squire was a Protestant who had forsaken the faith of his fathers.

"Just another word," he cried, and his voice rose above the din and the confusion. "Many here to-night have called me a liar and a coward. Am I a coward? Have I told a lie?"

"No, no!" shouted several from various parts of the hall; but there were only a few who dared to speak.

"Then let me have the fair play you promised. Let those of you who believe my words to be true stand by me."

Still no one moved to help him. Many wanted to, but they were afraid, especially as one of them who rushed towards the platform was a priest. They dared not attack a man who possessed such awesome powers, one whom all their lives they had been taught to fear and obey. It is true that on certain occasions, even in Ireland, people have risen against the priests and defied them. But these occasions have been rare, and those who have dared to revolt have nearly always repented, and have come to their spiritual fathers begging for forgiveness.

Nearer and nearer the assailants came, while all over the hall there was wild shrieking and angry shouts. Denis had never witnessed such a pandemonium before; the gathering had become a howling mob.

The assailants had reached the platform, and one by one clambered on to it, while the people in the hall, almost paralysed by fear, wondered what the outcome would be.

"Get out of the way," some shouted. "Ye can easily escape by the back door."

"No," cried Denis, "I will not run away." He was not that kind of man.

When the assailants had got on to the platform they hesitated. They had no doubt as to what they meant to do when they had struggled their way through the hall, but now they had reached the young squire they seemed to hesitate. It is not easy to attack an unresisting man; it requires a strong incentive to cause men who are sober to strike the first blow. And after all, Denis had insulted no one, and up to the present he had made himself popular in the district.

He stood calmly while half a dozen brawny men stood looking at him, and his very courage was his safeguard.

Pat O'Hara had risen from his chair, and there was a look in his eyes which the people seldom saw. John Grubb was a man of peace, and sat quietly watching, while old Anthony Trevelyan's eyes sparkled with anger. Old as he was he seemed ready for the fray. As for Rosaleen, she sat perfectly still, her lips parted, her hands clenched. She was the only woman on the platform, but her face showed no fear.

Almost as if by magic a silence came upon the audience again. The scene had become like a play in a theatre, and they were strangely interested spectators.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Denis.

The men who had come to attack him were silent. They knew not what to say. They had nothing about which they could complain. The young squire had ejected no tenants, he had struck no unfair blow. They suffered nothing that called for revenge. The spirit of murder was not fully aroused.

"You've insulted the Church, the faith," cried a priest.

"How?" asked Denis. "In what have I spoken falsely?"

"You've denounced the decrees of the Church," cried the priest. "Every word you've spoken has been an attack on the faith."

"Tell me how," said Denis calmly.

"Men, will ye stand this?" cried the priest. "You've heard what he said. He's just declared that the decree of our Holy Father the Pope is an abomination in the eyes of God. And he was born a Catholic, and Father Meharry baptised him into the Church. He's a traitor, and a blasphemer!"

The angry voice of the priest aroused the men to passion again, and they clenched their hands as if prepared to strike.

Then suddenly everything was changed. While the men stood hesitating to strike the first blow Rosaleen stepped between them and Denis.

"Faith, and I promised to speak if ye'd give everyone fair play, didn't I?" she cried. "Granddad, will ye call upon me to address the meeting?"

The tension was relieved as if by magic; more than one drew a sigh of relief, while many burst into laughter.

"Yes, yes, speak to us, Miss Rosaleen," was the cry on every side.

Still the priest and his followers stood as if undecided.

"Father Flint," said Rosaleen, "will you take a seat on the platform, or will you go back to where you came from?"

The girl laughed as she spoke, and her winsome presence made dark deeds impossible. Father Flint and the others were beaten: beaten by a young girl, who charmed the people with her youth, her laughter, her beauty. While she stood before them Denis was safe. She had seized upon the psychological moment, and averted the danger which undoubtedly existed.

Father Flint was the son of a farm labourer, and although he had gone for his training to Maynooth, and had for some years fulfilled his duties as a priest, he still had the instincts of his class. He knew there was a great social gulf between the young girl and himself. The O'Haras had always been great in Ireland, while his fathers had worked on the O'Hara's land.

"Now, then," continued the girl, "you, Father Flint, will sit in my chair, while you Jim McVean, Tim Leary, Jack Sullivan, and the rest av ye will go back to your seats. Mr. Kildare, will ye sit down? I am going to address the meeting."

Even Father Flint joined in the laughter which her words aroused, while the men shamefacedly returned to their seats. As a political meeting the gathering seemed a fiasco, but the girl knew the material with which she had to deal. Connella was an unsophisticated little Irish town; its people knew little of the ways of the world. Besides, Denis's oratory had not been in vain. What he had said would not be forgotten; the people had been influenced in spite of themselves.

Had any other woman done what Rosaleen had done many would have resented her action, and would have spoken of her as doing that which was unwomanly. But no one thought of this as the young girl stood before them. She was the granddaughter of old Pat O'Hara, who had been known and loved in the district from childhood. For years she had done with the cottagers what would be impossible for others to do. As a child they had

seen her riding around the countryside on her ragged pony, now going at a wild gallop, and again stopping to pick wild flowers or to stop at some cabin to cheer an Irish peasant. Some said she had power over bad fairies and evil spirits, and that never since she had been born had a banshee haunted Rathsheen. She had a wondrous power over men and animals. No dog was ever known to attack her, and she was not afraid to mount the wildest colt. No man had ever been known to molest her, no matter how drunk or quarrelsome he might be.

In a word, she stood alone. She was Rosaleen O'Hara, and she was beloved by all.

A few minutes later all anger had gone out of the meeting. What she said seemed to have but little political significance, and yet the wildest enthusiasm prevailed. Moreover, not only priests, but Denis, felt, long before her speech was finished, that she had not only saved the meeting from uproar, but that she had advocated his cause. She had aroused in them the longing for liberty, for responsibility, for the rights of manhood.

Only once was she interrupted, and this time it was by Father Meharry, who many believed was responsible for the scene which took place earlier in the evening.

"Do you mean to say," he cried, "that you, a Catholic, can ask the people to send a man to Parliament who said that the decrees of the Holy Father the Pope, are an abomination in the eyes of God?"

"I mean this," retorted Rosaleen, "that in things religious, true Catholics should obey their priests; but I think that priests should keep to their churches and to their spiritual work. I will go further," and the girl's eyes flashed brightly; "I have always gone to confession, as a good Catholic should; but when it comes to politics and the government of ould Ireland, I'd rather a hundred times be guided by my dear ould granddad than by any priest in the world."

The people cheered in spite of themselves: perhaps it was because of the girl's winning personality, or perhaps it was because she spoke what they felt to be right and true.

And thus Denis's first meeting ended. No formal vote was taken, and yet it was felt that many were ready to vote for him. Old Pat announced the other meetings that

had been arranged, and many quietly resolved to be present ; but they did not know which moved them most, the presence, and the almost irresponsible talk of the child they loved, or the fervid eloquence of the young squire. But they knew that Peter Luggan's meeting seemed poor and tame compared with this.

Before the week was over the issues of the election were in the main clear before the minds of the people. Peter Luggan was a priests' man. He stood for the Church, and for Church government in Ireland. He also advocated Home Rule, and spoke strongly of the right of the people to govern their own country. He went even further, and spoke of a separation from the country which he said had oppressed them. He fed their anger against England, and called for cheers for those who had fought against England in the South African war. But the people, even the most ignorant, felt that if ever separation took place, the real government of the nation, if they were represented by men like Luggan, would be in the hands of the priests, and that the Church, and the Church only, would rule them.

As far as Rosscommon's candidature was concerned, there was far less interest, because it was felt that he upheld what they regarded as alien control, and the people passionately clung to the sentiment that the government of Ireland should be by Irish people. Had there been any danger of his winning the election the fiercest passions would have been aroused, and bloody deeds committed, so strongly did they feel their right for Ireland to govern herself. Thus it was that his stories of the dark deeds done by the Irish League, and the ruin that would come upon Ireland if self-government were granted, were received with scorn. As for the hints that Protestants would be persecuted by their Romanist neighbours, they were only laughed at.

"Faith," they cried, "and haven't the Protestants the whip hand of us in everything ? Don't they live in the big houses, own the big shops ? Aren't they the landlords, and the employers of labour ? When have the Catholics persecuted Protestants because of their religion ?" And so Stephen Rosscommon was not looked on as a dangerous man.

But Denis Kildare was, as Father Flanagan said, a horse of a different colour. He, although reared in England and

loyal to his king and country, believed that the salvation of Ireland lay in arousing the sense of responsibility and independence in the hearts of the people. He loved Ireland and its people, and appealed to the national sentiment. He denounced every appeal to physical violence ; but he maintained that the Irish people should manage Irish affairs. All that Peter Luggan could say that was dear to the hearts of Irishmen concerning their own land, Denis could say far better. Added to this, although Luggan was a ready speaker, and could tell a good story with effect, he was not a popular man, neither could he by any stretch of the imagination be called a gentleman. He was coarse-featured too, and his general appearance did not help him. Denis, on the other hand, although he had been only a few months in the district, in spite of his being a Protestant, and although he had not been favourably regarded by the Church, was generally liked. He was young and handsome ; he had a ready laugh ; he was an educated man, and his forensic training enabled him to make many of Peter Luggan's statements look ridiculous. Besides, he was a Kildare, and although landlords had been hated in Ireland because they were landlords, the man of birth has always an advantage.

Thus it came about for the first time that in the Connella District there were two parties among the Roman Catholics. There was a clerical and an anti-clerical party. At first people were shy of espousing Denis's cause, but one by one they came over to his side. He said no word against any particular cleric, but the undertone of all his speeches was that priests should have no control in the domain of politics. He admitted that as a class they might be good men, and that they had often been the true friends, and often the only friends of the poor in their trouble, but he urged that they had no right to interfere with the liberties of the people.

"Don't take your opinions from Rome, nor let any cleric dictate your politics to you," was the burden of his plea. "Think your own thoughts, read for yourself, and assert your own manhood."

Old Pat O'Hara helped him greatly, and under Pat's influence a number of brawny men attended his meetings

and acted as policemen. Denis became the leader whom for years they had unconsciously longed for. Many had writhed under their yoke, but had never dared to try and throw it off. Faithful to the Church as they believed themselves to be, they resented the absolute control the priests had over their lives; but they could do nothing because they were ignorant, and they had no leader. Besides, their desires, their hopes, had been nebulous. They had wild yearnings for something which they could not express. Thus when a man came and put into words the things for which they had longed, when he interpreted to them in their own language the visions they had seen from afar, they flocked to his standard.

At first they did so timidly, hesitatingly, casting a fearful eye at the Church the whole time; but the seeds of liberty were sown, a new force was working in their lives.

Thus Denis was spoken of in the district as the leader of an anti-clerical party. That party stood for Ireland and Ireland's glory; it stood for the management of Irish affairs by Irishmen. It claimed that the people of Ireland should manage their schools, their colleges, their Church, all the time being a part of the great British Empire. And it claimed, too, that Ireland should not be dictated to by Rome, and that the priests should not control the people's politics.

It was a bold step for Denis to take, and he knew that he carried his life in his hands. Often he was met by angry scowls and threats and curses. It has been said again and again in Ireland that the man who opposes the power of the priests is doomed to failure. Never yet, it has been urged, has any man succeeded. Parnell, the strongest man Ireland ever had, dared to stand against them, and it seemed as though he had the nation at his back, yet this strong man was crushed. They held the purse strings of the land, they controlled the education of the people, they dictated from cabin and from church. Therefore they were omnipotent. Yet Denis dared to lead an anti-clerical party. He was not opposed to religion, neither would he interfere with any man's religious beliefs. But he urged that Ireland would never be free, no matter under whatever system of government she was, unless the people were free: free to think their own thoughts and

form their own judgments, untrammelled by any priestly power whatever.

"If you get self-government for Ireland," he said again and again, "but allow the priests to dictate to you, then you will be worse off instead of better; but if you realise your responsibility and be true to your inherent manhood, I can see a glorious day dawning for the land of the shamrock."

It was often dreary work. Many of the people were utterly ignorant, and they had so long taken their orders from the clerics that his words appeared to them as blasphemy. Scores looked upon him as not only a heretic, but an atheist; some called him a tool of the devil, whose mission it was to do the devil's work. The training and influences of many generations were against him. The serfdom of the mind is far worse than the serfdom of the body.

"May the torments of hell git hold av ye, ye son of Beelzebub!" he heard men mutter as he passed them in the streets.

On the Saturday following the meeting I have tried to describe, the *Connella Signal* issued an ably written and strongly worded article, proving to its own satisfaction that Denis was enemy not only of Ireland, but an enemy of morality, of order, of decent behaviour, and of religion. It took certain of his statements, and endeavoured to show that he uttered the most dangerous sentiments, and called upon every man to oppose him.

The article was inflammatory in the highest degree, for while it did not advocate outrage or persecution in so many words, its tendency was to so work upon an excitable people as to make his residence in the district impossible. Ignorant people could easily find in it an incentive to refuse to pay him his rents, to provide him food, or to refuse him any allegiance whatever.

One letter written over the signature of "Fiat Lux" declared that he had been "sent down" from Oxford, and another hinted that his life in England was such that he was expelled from all decent society. It was stated, moreover, that all the Protestant gentry in the district had closed their doors against him, and asked him to explain why it was so.

On the Saturday night another great meeting in support of Peter Luggan was held in the Connella public hall, and all the speakers denounced Denis as an enemy to the Church and of the public good.

"Will one of ye bemean yourself to vote for such a rascal?" cried one orator. "Is it not your duty rather to drive him out of a peaceable and godly district, and send him back to the pigsty from which he came? People say he's getting support; but who's supporting him? Aren't they made up of the off-scourings of the district?"

"Pat O'Hara and John Grubb support him," cried one bold enough to speak.

"And who's Pat O'Hara?" cried the orator. "Has he been to mass for the last twelve months? As for John Grubb, will you Catholics follow the leadings of a hypocritical Quaker?"

"What about Rosaleen?" cried a voice, and although the audience was almost entirely made up of Peter Luggan's supporters, many cheered.

"Yes, Rosaleen!" cried the orator; "but who will deny his evil influence upon that pure child?"

It was a dastardly statement, and many resented it, but many more laughed in such a way that had old Pat been there it would wellnigh have broken his heart.

The next day Denis was denounced in the churches, and people were warned against him as they might be warned against a pestilence.

I will not attempt to reproduce the statements made, or the warnings given. But the thunders of the Church were loud. He was denounced as an enemy of morality, of religion, of God. Never before had such excitement prevailed.

Many of Denis's meetings had been uproarious to a degree, and the wisest of the people shook their heads gravely as they discussed what the future might have in store.

On the night following it was arranged for Denis to come back to Rathsheen after addressing a meeting at a hamlet some little distance away. When he arrived at the village, a great crowd had gathered, but he was unable to make himself heard. A band of rowdies had gathered and made it impossible for him to speak. This was resented by Denis's supporters, and presently a free fight followed. The young

man left the hamlet amidst an indescribable uproar, covered with filth and offal which had been hurled at him. At one time he thought he would never escape alive, but he was enabled to do so by the aid of several brawny fellows.

He realised now, as he had never realised before, the difficulty of the task he had undertaken. He had expected opposition and abuse; but he had never dreamed that he would be subject to such insults as he had received during the past week. Moreover, but for the exception of Pat O'Hara and Rosaleen, he felt himself alone in the fight. His grandfather had returned to England directly after his first meeting. All those who had been his friends when he first came into the district had practically boycotted him. Lenore had not answered his letter, and so he could do no other than conclude that she had cast him off for ever. He had done what he believed to be right, and he was paying the price. He felt utterly down-hearted, and was almost ready to give up.

As his motor swept up the grass-grown drive which led to Rathsheen, however, his heart grew lighter. The thought of the welcome he would receive from Pat O'Hara and Rosaleen cheered him. A few seconds later he stood at the door of the old house, where Rosaleen met him.

"What's the matter?" cried the girl, as she noted his dishevelled appearance.

"Only a rowdy meeting," he replied. "I am afraid I shall have to trouble someone to brush my coat while I get a wash."

"But you are not hurt?" cried the girl. "No one has dared to harm you?" and her eyes burned dangerously.

"No, I am all right," he replied with a laugh; "there is no need to order my coffin yet."

A few minutes later he returned to the room presenting a more respectable appearance.

"Granddad had to go to Cork," said Rosaleen; "I thought he would have been back before this. He will be here in a few minutes. Shall we wait for supper until he comes?"

"By all means," cried Denis. "I'm not hungry."

He was almost glad Pat was not there. It was very pleasant to be alone with Rosaleen. There was something in her very presence that cheered him in spite of himself.

" You look very pale," said the girl ; " you're not ill, are you ? "

" No. Only a bit down-hearted."

" But granddad says your chances are improving every day."

He shook his head. " Of course there's no hope of my getting in," he said. " There never was. I wasn't thinking of that."

" What are you thinking about, then ? Tell me."

" Oh, nothing, worth while."

" But you are. You look pale, and tired. What is troubling you ? Tell me."

" I'm wondering whether I'm not fighting an impossible battle. I can do nothing. The priests are too strong for me. Do you know they denounced me in the churches yesterday ? "

" Yes ; but you—you don't mind, do you ? "

" No—that is, I don't care a fig about their denunciation, but—I'm wondering whether it's all worth while."

" Your hand is bleeding," cried the girl. " You're hurt ! "

" No ; a fellow threw a stone at me, but he nearly missed me altogether. I can assure you it's nothing." Still, he sighed from pure weariness.

" You've been reading Saturday's *Connella Signal*. I was afraid it would worry you. I was hoping you wouldn't see it. Take no notice of it. I don't mind at all. No one will believe it."

He caught the look in her eyes, and wondered. As a matter of fact he had scarcely looked at the paper. He did not belong to the class who fed upon such garbage. But the girl's eyes made him fearful. A copy of the paper lay upon the table, and he stretched out his hand for it."

" Don't bother about it," she cried. " I don't mind at all, and it doesn't hurt me a bit. Even granddad said it was only written to do you harm."

He snatched up the paper and began to read. Almost the first sentence that caught his eyes was that used by the speaker at Peter Luggan's meeting, and spoke of him, Denis, as having an evil influence upon a pure girl's life.

" It's dastardly !" he cried with flashing eyes. " How dare they drag in your name in such a way ! "

"Oh, I don't mind. I don't mind a bit! Oh, what is the matter?"

For Denis had started up, and was walking around the room.

"I'll give it up," he said. "Better lose a thousand elections than that you should be pained like this."

The girl sat looking at him with wild wonder in her eyes: She had never seen him look so sad and dejected before. He was utterly tired, and felt beaten. He knew of no weapons to meet such an attack as this. He threw himself in a chair and buried his face in his hands.

"For myself I don't care a fig," and his voice trembled with anger, "but that they should dare to drag in your name!"

"Do you care?" gasped the girl.

"Care! Of course I care! I would rather lose a hundred elections than that you should be caused a moment's pain."

The girl sobbed for very joy. "Oh, Denis," she cried, "I'm the happiest girl in Ireland!"

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ROSALEEN'S HEART

AT first he did not understand what she meant. The thought that Rosaleen cared for him more than she might care for any of her grandfather's other friends never occurred to him. His mind had been too full of Lenore for him to think of another. Besides, Rosaleen was just a wild, untutored child, so artless, and so far removed from the life of other young girls, that he never associated her with marriage or giving in marriage. But as he caught the look in her eyes and heard the sob in her voice, it was impossible for him to be mistaken. The girl loved him with a passionate, absorbing love ; and she had told him so.

"I've been sitting here all the evening alone thinking about you," went on Rosaleen artlessly. "I was afraid to believe you could ever care for me—it was too good to be true. But oh, I am so happy now ! Why do you look so strange ? You are not ill, are you ? Tell me, Denis—you must not keep anything from me—have they hurt you ? "

"No, they have not hurt me."

He was trying to control his thoughts, trying to think what to say to this beautiful child who had so artlessly confessed her love.

"Then I care for nothing. You care for me, and you are with me," and she laughed gaily.

To her, everything was as it should be. She knew nothing of the conventions of the world. Since leaving the convent school where she was entirely sheltered from the great life outside, she had lived alone with her grandfather. Rathsheen was far removed from any great centre, and she had had no companions of her own age. Her books were mainly composed of lives of the saints, and of stories and poetry of old Ireland, and she had given no thought to

wedding any man. Indeed, Denis was the only young man who had ever visited her home, for old Pat guarded her jealously. Thus it came about that when a handsome young fellow came to her grandfather's lonely house and espoused the cause which was to her the greatest cause in the world, he became her hero, and filled her thoughts day and night. She knew nothing of his love for Lenore ; indeed, it was generally believed in the neighbourhood that while no formal engagement existed, she was pledged to Ross-common. "And do you really—mean to say that—that you care for me—that is—that way ?" he stammered.

The girl looked at him with love-lit eyes. She had given him her heart, and it seemed as natural for her to tell him so, as for a singing bird to call to its mate in the springtime.

"Of course I do," she said simply. "Why, you knew ! Oh, Denis, you don't know how I've prayed that you might love me. I didn't believe you could ; for how could one so clever as you, who have lived in England, care for a poor wild girl like me ? But I couldn't help hoping. For, oh, I love you more than my life ! That day—do you remember it ?—that day when I saw you in the lane when I was trying to get that man to go home to his wife, and you rode along. You remember it, don't you ?"

"Yes, I remember it."

He spoke like a man in a dream. His mind was in a whirl. He was wondering how he should tell this simple child of nature that he loved Lenore Tyrone with a helpless love ; that he had loved her ever since he was a boy of seventeen.

"I knew then that you were he of whom I had dreamed," she went on. "In my dreams you had always seemed a long way off, and I could never make you look at me. Do what I might your eyes would never meet mine. But that day you did look at me, and my heart seemed on fire. I wanted to speak to you then, but I couldn't : something kept me. But I knew we should meet again ; then when you came, and I thought you liked me, the sun shone as it never shone before."

"But you said you would—not like me if I did not espouse your cause."

He did not know why he said this, but there seemed nothing else to say at that moment.

"Yes, I've wondered at it myself," she replied simply. "But I felt sure you would. You don't seem happy, Denis. Aren't you glad that I love you?"

"But do you?" he said. "That is, are you sure?"

"Sure I love you!" she cried. "Oh, but sure, and you're laughing at me? Why, Denis, I'd die for you! Look at my eyes now, straight at my eyes, and then tell me if I don't love you."

He lifted his eyes to hers, and even if he doubted before he could not doubt now. The great dark velvety eyes burned with the passion of her heart. She was but a child in experience, but he knew that her love was the love of a woman, and her eyes told her story. And they told him wondrous things: he saw wild passion; but he saw too a tender devotion, a sweet winsomeness that only those whose hearts are pure can ever possess. He saw a love that was stronger than death, and he felt afraid.

For Denis was no fast young man about town who could boast of his conquests. He had always idealised women, and his love for Lenore had always made him think of them as something far higher and purer than men. He had thought of Rosaleen as a beautiful, captivating child, but he had never thought of her loving him. Such a thing seemed impossible. But now as he looked into the depths of her eyes he knew that she spoke the truth, and, as I said, he was afraid.

And yet he was glad in spite of himself. Such a love was holy, and it made all life sweeter, purer.

"Don't I love you, Denis?" she said. "Don't I love you better than my life? Oh, I should die now if anyone stole your love from me! Yes, and I would kill her! I would, I would. But I'll not think of that. You love me, you love me—don't you, Denis?"

He knew not what to say; for he did love her. Not as he loved Lenore, but as he might love a younger sister, whom he would care for and keep from harm.

"You said you cared," she went on, "or I couldn't have said what I have. Yes, I could, though. I was going to tell you. You looked so sad and careworn that I wanted to cheer you—wanted to make you happy; and I knew of no other means of making you happy except by telling you I loved you. And you are happy now, aren't you?"

What could he say? Yes, she had made him happy in spite of himself. He had come to the house feeling defeated, hopeless, alone; and she had cheered him; she had made the sky of his life brighter. And he could not wound her by telling her all the truth, any more than he could wound some trusting child who had come to him with words of love on her lips.

"Yes, I am happy now," he said.

"Oh, Denis, how happy I am!" she murmured; and then she went on, just as if she were a little child: "Kiss me, Denis, won't you?"

"Hark!" he said; "what's that?"

"It's grandad. How glad he'll be!"

"Does he know anything?"

"I don't know. I expect so."

"But you've told him nothing?"

"No. Somehow I couldn't; I don't know why."

"Then don't—that is, I'll speak to him. We must not let anyone know anything at present. Later on he shall know—everything."

The girl laughed joyfully. "Oh, I'm so happy, Denis," she cried, "so happy." Then she put her arms around his neck and pressed her lips to his with fond, passionate kisses.

"Oh! my love, my love!" she whispered again; and again, "how happy I am!"

Old Pat came into the room. "I thought I should have got here before you," was his greeting, "but Murphy tells me you have been here only a few minutes. Ah, but you shouldn't have waited for supper. You must be hungry. I've heard about your meeting to-night. Rosaleen, my darling, will you ring for supper? No, we won't have a word about politics until we've supped, and then I must break my rule, and we'll discuss matters till midnight."

The old man's tones were hearty and natural. Denis felt sure he knew nothing of what Rosaleen had told him. In a way he was glad, and yet he was afraid, he knew not why.

After supper they talked of the election. Pat had read the *Connella Signal*, and was angry at much of its contents; but he professed faith in the future.

"I tell you, Kildare," he said, "you've made more

progress than you know. All this opposition is because Mehaberry and his gang are afraid of you. Don't you see, they're quite polite to Rosscommon because they know they've nothing to fear from him. It's you they fear. The election is being talked about in the country, too. You are looked upon as the leader of an anti-clerical party ; that's why you are hated so."

"I don't expect to win," replied Denis, "and—and I almost feel like giving up."

"It would be treason to do so," cried Pat. "I tell you this election is an educational force in the whole district. The peasants are talking in a way they never talked before ; they are beginning to realise their rights. Mind, I don't say you'll win ; but you're sowing the seeds of liberty."

Denis shook his head.

"Never fear," went on Pat. "This election has made me more convinced than ever, that if Ireland has self-government, she will throw off her shackles and become free."

"Of course that's my hope," said Denis ; "but think of the fate of Parnell, and Parnell's cause. While the priests did not oppose him he had Ireland at his feet, but directly they went against him he was helpless."

"Yes, yes, my lad, I know. But Parnell outraged the conscience of the nation ; that was why they had the whip hand of him. But even as it was, I believe if he had lived he would have beaten the whole tribe of them. He fought a great fight, as you know, and a divided Ireland would have resulted in a free nation. As I have often told you, my great hope for self-government for the country is not in the good legislation we shall have for the first ten years of the new Parliament's life, but in giving the people a sense of responsibility. We shall have a clerical party and a people's party, and that will lead to divisions of opinion : it will lead the people to act according to their own judgment. That will mean the dawn of the morning for Ireland."

During the time they were talking Rosaleen sat looking at Denis with love-lit eyes. She had no doubts, no fears. She could see that he was perplexed and bewildered ; but she believed in the power of her love to charm away his fears and to smooth his path. She did not dream of

the thoughts that were surging in his mind, and she attributed the fearful wondering look in his eyes to the election he was fighting. But in a week or two all this would be over, and then she would enter into her kingdom. Meanwhile she believed that he loved her, and all was well.

"Ah, there's my car," said Denis at length; "it's time for me to go."

"Yes. We'll get a good night's rest. I'm taking the chair at to-morrow's meetings. Keep up your heart, my lad."

The old man went a few paces ahead of them in order to speak to his servant. Rosaleen grasped Denis's hand.

"Sure, and I'll be praying for you, and loving you all the time," she whispered. "And you'll be thinking of me, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll be thinking of you, Rosaleen."

"And you'll come early to-morrow?"

"I'll come to lunch. I—I must speak to your grandfather to-morrow."

"Oh, my darling, I love you, I love you!" she whispered.

"May the saints protect you, and may God's blessing go with you."

And these were the words that kept ringing in the young man's ears as the motor-car rushed along the lonely lanes. They made his heart beat with joy, but they made him sad, and afraid too. He had won this child's heart unknowingly—won it although his own heart was given to another.

When he reached his own house he threw himself into a chair and tried to think. The election was no longer uppermost in his mind; everything else was swallowed up in the confession of Rosaleen's love.

He blamed himself for the course events had taken. He ought to have told her immediately that he did not care for her in the way she had thought, that he regarded her only as a brother might regard a sister. But somehow he could not. Her artlessness, her perfect love for him, and confidence in him, kept him from saying that which would have broken her heart. How could he, in the face of the love-joy that shone from her eyes, tell her that he loved another? It was owing to the fact that he loved her very dearly that he could not utter the words that would wound her so cruelly.

But what should he do ?

The question had to be faced. He had to realise the fact that Lenore was lost to him for ever. She had cast him off because he had espoused a cause which was hateful to her, and was working with people whom she called traitors and rebels. In his letter he had pleaded with her as only a passionate lover can plead, and she had not deigned to send a word of reply. He owed her no allegiance therefore, and he was not bound to her by a gossamer thread. And she did not love him. How could she, when because he had been true to his convictions she had cast him off from her ? Even that day he had heard her spoken of as the promised wife of Stephen Rosscommon.

And Rosaleen loved him with all the fervour of her devoted passionate nature. She had made no conditions, stipulated for no terms. Well, why could he not accept her love, and rejoice in it ? For he loved her. Not as he loved Lenore, but still he loved her. She had cheered him when he was sad, her laughter and her song had more than once charmed away the evil spirits from his heart. And she was as beautiful as a dream ; she was the spirit of youth and purity ; and her heart was a possession in which any man might rejoice.

Then the vision of Lenore as he saw her on the River Fal came to him, and he remembered the love he had borne her ever since. Would he not be unfaithful to the dream of his life if he tried to forget her ?

But what of the future ? He was lonely in the great house he had inherited, and he had alienated himself from all those who had been his friends. Was he to spend his life in loneliness, when Rosaleen loved him ? Should he break her heart because he loved a woman who could never be his ?

Besides, he must think of old Pat. Perhaps he had guessed what was in his grandchild's heart. Could he go to the old man and tell him of what Rosaleen had said, and say it was all a haggard mistake ?

And the love of the young Irish girl was sweet to him. She was not cold and critical like Lenore, but warm-hearted and impulsive.

Still, he had held to the hope that somehow the chasm which existed between himself and Lenore might be

bridged, and the thought of giving her up was destroying the dearest hope of his life.

All through the night he lay tossing on his bed, and when morning came he was still undecided what to do. He wanted to do right by Rosaleen, but he could not decide what was right. Which ought an honourable man to do : to tell her that she had been mistaken, and that he loved another although his love was hopeless, or to let her go on thinking he loved her, even although his heart was elsewhere ?

The following morning he found a heap of letters on his desk which had come by the morning's post. After answering these he had his horse saddled and rode out to see what was being done at two of the more remote places in the constituency. His mind was still unsettled. He was not sure, even although Lenore had discarded his love, that it would be right to keep the truth from Rosaleen. He was not sure, on the other hand, that it would be right to wound her heart by telling her of the hopes of past years. And then he went over all the old questions again.

Suddenly his heart stood still. Riding side by side he saw Stephen Rosscommon and Lenore coming towards him. He knew that she had been working very hard for Rosscommon, and they were probably coming from one of the outlying villages where Rosscommon hoped to get some votes. As they drew near to each other Denis drew up his horse as if to speak, but with a curt nod Rosscommon rode on. As for Lenore, she did not even look at him, and her face looked as cold as marble.

This, then, was her answer to his letter ; this was the end of his dreams. To her a set of political opinions was more than the devotion of a lifetime. She did not love Rosscommon ; of that he was sure ; and yet she was going to marry him. Why, then, should he continue to think of her, to long for her, when she had steeled her heart against him ?

His eyes followed Rosscommon and Lenore as they rode together. Yes, they were laughing and talking gaily ; probably he was the cause of their merriment. Then he thought of Rosaleen : he remembered her words of love, the flash of her great dark eyes, and the kisses she had pressed

upon his lips. Why should he not rejoice in such a love, instead of for ever dreaming of a marble statue ?

A few minutes later he was galloping towards Rathsheen, and as he rode he saw the vision of her love-lit eyes.

When he reached the lodge gates he checked his horse. The old doubts came surging back again, the dreams of his boyhood exerted their old-time power. He rode slowly up the drive, wondering what to do. He had gone but a little way when he heard a glad cry ; it was Rosaleen, who had come to welcome him.

"I knew you would be early, Denis," she cried, "and I couldn't wait in the house. Sure, and how could I, when my heart told me you were coming to me ?"

Surely no fairer sight could meet any man's eyes as she ran eagerly towards him. Her face was flushed, and her eyes sparkled with her newly found joy. Never had he seen such a radiant creature ; even Lenore's face grew dim as he saw her.

Instinctively he leapt from his horse and stood by her ; but as she looked into his face laughter died on her lips.

"What is the matter, Denis ?" she asked.

"Nothing," he replied.

"But you look sad, pale, ill. You have heard no evil news, have you ?"

He shook his head.

"Then, then you are not glad to see me ?"

He saw her eyes fill with tears, her lips tremble. How could he break her heart by telling her all the truth ? It would be cruel.

"I'm very, very glad to see you. I'm—tired, very tired ; that's all."

The light of joy came back to her eyes again. In spite of himself his own heart beat lighter. Who could be sad with this radiant maiden at his side ?

"Then come into the house and rest. Granddad is there. He's preparing his speeches for to-night."

"Are you happy, Rosaleen ?" he asked.

"Happy !" she laughed. "I haven't slept a wink for the night. I couldn't. My heart was singing aloud to me all the time. Do you know what it was singing, Denis ? It was always this : 'He's coming to-morrow. My love is coming to-morrow.' I pictured you going back alone.

I saw you sitting in your library, and I knew that you were happy because we should meet to-day. Early this morning I came out here alone. Oh, it was wonderful, Denis! I saw the sun rise. I watched the birth of a new day. And the silence was wonderful, wonderful. It spoke, my love; the silence had a language. I felt that God was all around me. Then the birds began to sing, and they all sang the same song, Denis. 'Your love is coming, coming, coming!' they said; and now you are here! Is it any wonder I am happy?"

They walked on slowly for a few steps. He did not speak; he was afraid.

"You are angry with me, disappointed in me," she said. "I know you are."

"No, no. Why should I be?"

"You have not kissed me. And—and no one would see. Don't you love me enough?"

She spoke just as a child might speak, and for a moment he longed to take her in his arms and forget everything else. Surely it was right? He owed no allegiance to any other woman, and he would add to this pure child's joy.

"Rosaleen," he said, "I want to speak seriously with you."

"Seriously! what about? The election."

"The election! No; I think I have forgotten all about that since—last night."

"So have I. What do I care about the election now I know you love me? Yes, I do, though. I love Ireland; I long for her freedom. What do you want to say to me?"

"I've been thinking I ought to speak to—to your grandfather," he said; "but before I do there are things that must be said. I—I want to do right."

"What things, Denis?"

"Well, this, first of all. You want Ireland to be a free nation, to be separated from England. That would be hateful to me. I love England, and I am loyal to it."

"And you want me to be loyal to it. It's hard, Denis, when I think of the past; but I will be, I will. I will be guided by you. Is that all, Denis, my love?"

"No, it's not all, Rosaleen. You are a Roman Catholic, and I am a Protestant."

"But that does not hinder us from loving each other."

"No; but—your priest would forbid you to marry me. He would say it was sin."

"Oh, but I shall convert you. You will embrace the faith."

He shook his head. "I could never do that," he said.

"Then—then—oh, Denis, what does it matter? I love God, and so do you. Catholic, or no Catholic, I love you. I—I would marry you even though I had to be married in a Protestant church."

"Then you would be excommunicated."

A look of fear came into her eyes for a moment, but only for a moment. "But I should have *you*, Denis," was her answer, "and I don't believe God would cease to love me. Do you believe He would? Do you think He would shut me out of the kingdom, because—oh, my love, my love!"

"I am sure He would not; but the priests would tell you that you were outside the kingdom."

"That would not matter. I should not believe them; and you would be with me."

"Then, there is another thing," he went on. "You would be left alone. I am hated by both Protestants and Catholics. You would have no friends."

"I never have had friends," she replied, "but that would not matter. I should have you. But oh, Denis, you are not saying these things because you do not want me, are you? You are not thinking you'd be ashamed of me because I am an ignorant Irish girl, who knows nothing of the ways of fine English ladies. It isn't that, is it?"

"No," cried the young man, "it's not that. Ashamed of you! Why, there's not a lady in England half as beautiful as you."

"Do you think I'm beautiful, Denis? Tell me again, will you?"

"You are more beautiful than anyone I ever saw," he said.

"Do you really think so, Denis?" and there was a look of wonder in her eyes. "Oh, I am so glad! Not that I care so much for myself, although I want to be beautiful, but because I can give it to you, and because you'll be proud of me. Am I speaking too freely, Denis? Would you rather I had been reserved, and cold? But I couldn't. Directly I knew you loved me I couldn't help telling you

that you were all the world to me. That my country, my grandfather, even my Church, became as nothing compared with you. Tell me again that you love me, Denis ; it makes me so happy.

" And if I didn't ? " he said.

" What ? " she gasped.

" What if I loved someone better ? "

Every particle of colour receded from her cheeks, and a look of horror came into her eyes.

" But you do not ! " she gasped. " Tell me that you do not. I should go mad. I—I—but tell me you are only jesting."

He thought of Lenore as he had seen her that morning, and then he looked into Rosaleen's face. He could not tell her the truth. Besides, Lenore had scorned him ; she had plighted her troth to another man—at least, so he believed.

" Tell me you are only jesting ! " she cried, and her voice was hoarse with pain.

" I—I wanted to test your love," he stammered ; " I know it was mean of me."

He looked into her great dark eyes, and into his heart came a great pity which was akin to love. Yes, she was very dear to him, and he would do anything to save her from pain. He put his arm around her and kissed her.

" There," he said, " that is my answer."

Instantly her face was suffused with joy, the light of a great happiness shone in her eyes.

" Denis," she cried, and there was a sob in her voice, " I know I am an ignorant girl, but I will give my life to make you happy."

For a few seconds they walked on silently : he strangely happy, so great was the power of her love over his life ; she with a great wonder in her heart.

" You are not disappointed in me, are you ? " she asked presently.

" No, no."

" You are sure ? "

" Quite sure."

She looked at his face intently, as though she would read his innermost thought.

" Denis," she said presently, and her voice was low,

" I am very, very happy, but I would rather you did not tell granddad, nor anyone—yet. I don't know why, but I would rather you didn't."

" But I want to tell him, Rosaleen. I want to tell everyone."

" You mustn't—at least, not yet. Promise me you will not," and there was a look in her eyes he had never seen before.

A few minutes later he was talking with old Pat O'Hara, but he never said a word about what had passed between him and Rosaleen.

" You know that the polling day is fixed ? " said the old man.

" Yes," replied Denis; " it is a week to-morrow. We have all our work cut out."

" Yes," replied Pat thoughtfully. Then he turned to a document that lay on the table.

" Have you seen this ? " he continued.

" What is it ? " asked Denis.

" Read," said Pat.

Denis read the document very carefully. It was a letter from an ecclesiastic of high standing to the Catholic electors of the constituency, and gave instructions as to the action the voters should take in relation to the election. It advocated moderation of speech, and spoke strongly against violent action of any sort; but it insisted very strongly that the people should support the candidate who was faithful to the Church and upheld the cause of religion. It enlarged upon the evil of unbelief, and spoke of the calamities which had befallen those nations which had refused to take the Church as their guide.

It was couched in dignified language, and refrained from all personalities; but its purport was unmistakable.

" That means the loss of hundreds of votes," said Pat.

" I suppose so."

" Undoubtedly it does. Many who would have voted for you, even in spite of Meharry and Flint and the rest of them, will not dare to do so in face of this."

" Of course I knew all along that the priests would be too strong for us."

" You see," went on Pat, " you have advocated, in case Ireland has self-government, all sorts of safeguards

for Protestants; and you have advocated this in such a way that the clerical party regard it as an insult. But besides that you have urged the people not to allow the Church to dictate their politics. Still, I don't lose heart; we shall fight a good fight, and it will not be in vain. You have sown seed that will bear fruit."

"It does seem, though, as if Home Rule would be Rome Rule, doesn't it?" said Denis, looking at the document.

"For how long?" said Pat. "For five years—perhaps; but at the end of five years there would be the beginning of a new Ireland."

"Are you ready for the meetings to-night?"

"Yes. I want to ride over to Ballysheen and Koruna this afternoon, but I'll meet you at seven o'clock at Rathmena. I fancy we shall have rough meetings. I'm going to prepare for it."

"Why?" asked Denis. "This document advocates moderation in words and an avoidance of all rowdyism."

"I know," said Pat; "but rowdyism, violence, is in the very air we breathe."

"You'll let me go, granddad, won't you?" said Rosaleen.

"No, my child, not to-night," said the old man. "Even you would do no good when whisky has been given out freely."

"But you'll be careful, Denis?" cried the girl to the young man when he left her.

"Yes, I'll be careful."

"You'll say nothing to arouse the people's anger. You know I should die if any harm were to happen to you."

That night it was said that Denis spoke more eloquently than he had ever spoken before, and that many who had hitherto been opposed to him contemplated coming over to his side. Towards the end of the second meeting, however, a band of roughs forced their way to the platform. Later in the evening Denis was carried, unconscious, to Rathsheen, and the doctor, when he had seen him, shook his head gravely.

## CHAPTER XXV

### ROSALEEN AND LENORE

THE next day there were all sorts of wild rumours in the neighbourhood. Some had it that Denis's life hung on a thread, and that the doctors had given up all hope of his recovery. Some said that he had died a few hours after he had arrived at Rathsheen, while others said that although he would recover from the terrible blows he had received, he could not leave his bed before the polling took place.

That he was very severely hurt, none doubted. Many had watched him as he was lifted into his car, and had seen the blood trickling down his face.

Who was responsible for the assault no one seemed to be sure. Some had it that a number of bullies had been incited to do the deed by some publicans who had been angered by what Denis had said concerning their trade. Others, again, had it that his assailants were sent from Cork, because he was an enemy to the religion ; while many said that Peter Luggan's party, maddened by the fact that the young man was gaining so many votes, determined to make his election impossible.

The fact remained, however, that he was seriously ill, and all sorts of exaggerated reports were circulated. As may be imagined, too, the event aroused a good deal of sympathy on his behalf. Naturally, there are no kinder-hearted people in the world than the Irish, and Denis had done many generous things since he had been in the district. He had helped the poor, given work to the unemployed, and taken a sincere interest in the condition of the people. Thus, apart from religion and political prejudice, he was popular.

On the morning following the meeting at which he was

so cruelly maltreated Sir Charles Tyrone came into the room where Lenore was sitting, and said excitedly :

" There's terrible news about Kildare."

The girl looked at her father questioningly, and she felt her heart beating violently.

" He was speaking at Ballysheen last night, and some rowdies attacked him. I've just heard that he's dead."

The girl gasped as though she found a difficulty in breathing, but she uttered no word.

" I can't quite get at the truth of it," went on Sir Charles ; " there are so many reports afloat. Every cottager within a mile of Kildare Castle is wild with excitement, and every man has a different story."

" But why didn't you go up to the Castle and inquire ? "

The girl spoke in a toneless voice, and in her eyes was a look of terror. Sir Charles did not notice this, however. He was walking excitedly around the room, and was not looking towards his daughter.

" If he'd been there I'd have done so," replied Sir Charles. " God knows I don't wish the fellow any harm, although he's played us false. But he's at the house of that old rebel O'Hara, and I couldn't go there. Besides, I daresay he'd set his dogs on me. Still, I've sent a man over there for news."

Lenore Tyrone did not move from her chair. She seemed to be stunned by what she had heard.

" Of course," went on Sir Charles, " it's what might be expected. He adopted an impossible position. He tried to make a third party. He advocates self-government, and was opposed to priest rule ; as a consequence he was opposed by the Protestants on the one hand and the priests on the other."

" But it has been said that he has gained a big following."

The girl's mind seemed far away, and apparently she had very little interest in the words she uttered.

" Yes, that was the cause of the trouble, I expect. Luggan's party was afraid of him. Of course I've no sympathy with his politics, but I wish him no harm. After all, he's an honourable young fellow."

By this time Lenore Tyrone was able to control her feelings. Her face was very pale, but her voice sounded more natural.

"He's at Rathsheen, you say?"

"Yes; you see it's not far from Ballysheen, and Kildare has become very friendly with old Pat and his granddaughter. It is said in the village that the girl is nearly out of her mind."

Lenore did not speak again. Her father's words seemed to have a strange effect upon her.

"It seems like God's judgment on him," went on Sir Charles. "Even he must see by this time, if he's alive, that he's acted the part of a madman. Oh, there's Rosscommon coming up the drive. I expect he'll know the truth."

The baronet left the room as he spoke, leaving Lenore alone. Everything was very strange to her. When first her father had spoken, it seemed to her as though the room was whirling around; then a dull pain had come into her heart, and she had felt as though nothing mattered very much. After that she had a feeling of resentment. Why should that wild Irish girl go mad because Denis Kildare was dying or dead? What was he doing at Rathsheen, anyhow?

Stephen Rosscommon and Sir Charles entered the room together.

"It seems he's not so bad after all," said Rosscommon. "I saw Dr. Kinsale an hour ago, and he says he'll very likely pull through, although he's in a bad way. He was very badly knocked about, but no limbs were broken, and he's quite conscious this morning."

A great weight seemed to be rolled from Lenore's heart, and the atmosphere of the room was not quite so stifling.

"Can you give me particulars?" asked Sir Charles.

"Oh, it seems that Kildare spoke as he has never spoken before, and made a tremendous impression. Some say that he won a lot of converts, but that, of course, is pure conjecture. His great point was that he believed in Home Rule because he was a convinced Protestant; and while he said no word against any man's religion, he pleaded with the people to be masters of their own minds, their own consciences, their own judgments. I was told that he got the people wild with enthusiasm, and that a good many fought for him as though he were some hero. You see, a number of fellows—strangers, I am told—rushed to the plat-

form while he was speaking, and there was a regular free fight. I wonder he wasn't killed outright."

"It's a pity he's not on our side," said Sir Charles. "The fellow seems to know no fear; he's dared to attack the strongholds of our enemies far more vigorously than we've dared ourselves."

"And got nearly killed for his pains," said Rosscommon. "Besides, he occupies a most untenable position. The result of his meeting shows how impossible it is for these peasants to use their own judgments."

"Of course, of course," said Sir Charles. "Still, I'm sorry for him. I liked him very much, and if he hadn't got hold of this hare-brained idea that the way to give the people liberty was to give them a knife by which they could cut their own throats, he would have been a tower of strength on our side. The fellow *is* a Protestant."

"One thing this row has done anyhow," said Rosscommon. "I hear that the editor of the *Signal* is so sorry for him, and so angry at the brutal assault, that he's printing his speech *in extenso*. There'll be a big demand for the paper."

"I expect so," said Sir Charles. "Well, I hope he'll get better; but of course he's made his position impossible. No man can have anything to say to him now that he's chosen the O'Haras as his friends. But come into my study, Stephen. Of course you'll stay to lunch, and there are several things I want to discuss with you before then."

Rosscommon looked longingly at Lenore, who had scarcely spoken a word while he had been in the room.

"Certainly, Sir Charles," he said. "Lenore, may I have a few minutes with you before I leave? I have to rush off to Connella soon after lunch."

The girl nodded her head, and then rushed away to her own room, where for a long time she sat alone, thinking deeply.

By the time lunch was announced the messenger whom Sir Charles had sent to Rathsheen had returned. He brought the news that Denis was much better; and while he was very ill, he was quite conscious, and it was fervently hoped he would soon be well again.

"Is he likely to be about before the polling day?" asked Rosscommon; but concerning this the man could say nothing.

After lunch Lenore found her way into the garden, where Rosscommon followed her. The young Irishman's face was pale; in his eyes was a look of resolve.

"Lenore," he said, "you know that it is polling day next Wednesday?"

The girl nodded. She felt sure of what he was going to say to her.

"I want to ask this," he went on: "is my happiness to depend on the result of the election?"

"Of course it will be a great disappointment to you if you do not get in." She laughed nervously as she spoke.

"You know what I mean, Lenore. I have been led to believe that if I win this election you would marry me."

"I never promised any such thing," she answered quickly.

"No, I know; but you knew I was buoyed up by the thought, and you did not shatter my hopes."

"But why do you speak of this now? It was understood that the subject should not be broached again until my birthday, or until—"

"I had won the election," interrupted Rosscommon. "Of course I know how dear our cause is to you. I know, too, how angry you were with Kildare when he deserted us and went over to the side of the rebels. No one has worked harder for our party than you, and if I am returned, it will be because of what you have done. But I shall not be returned, Lenore. Kildare has made it impossible."

She looked at him eagerly.

"Yes, it's no use denying it: he has turned a number of our Protestant supporters into Home Rulers. He has made them believe in his wild-brained schemes. He has made them feel that they can oppose us without being untrue to their Protestantism. I shall not get in. My candidature is not considered seriously. But for him I should have stood a chance; but now it is impossible. But, Lenore, is the hope of years to be destroyed because of that? Give me some word of comfort."

The girl spoke no word. She walked on, unconscious of whither she went, while Rosscommon kept by her side.

"Even if Kildare were to die," went on Rosscommon, "I should stand no chance. The bulk of the people do not believe in us. It is impossible for us to get up the same

enthusiasm here in the South of Ireland, where the Protestants are comparatively few, as there is in Ulster."

"Why is that, I wonder?" she asked. Evidently she was eager to lead Rosscommon away from the thing which was so dear to him. "Up in Ulster they say they do not fear for themselves, but for the Protestants in the South and West of Ireland. And yet the Protestants down here do not fear or hate Home Rule half as much as they do."

"Of course I'm going to fight to the end," said Rosscommon; "and even if I do not get in I hope I shall poll more votes than Kildare."

Lenore was silent.

"Do you hope I'll get in, Lenore?"

"Of course I do."

"And I may hope for happiness if I do, mayn't I? That has been understood, hasn't it?"

"I have promised nothing."

"I know that; still, you have allowed me to believe that—— I say, Lenore, has Kildare ever had the cheek to propose to you?"

The girl's eyes flashed with anger; and as Rosscommon saw it a feeling of jealousy crept into his heart.

"I wish he'd never come into the neighbourhood," he said. "You've never been the same to me since he came. Do you like—that is—I say——"

"I think you have forgotten yourself," she said coldly. "Won't father be waiting to take you to your meetings?"

"Hang the meetings!" cried Rosscommon. "What do I care about them compared with you? Besides, I know it's a fiasco. Luggan's party don't seriously consider me, that's why I want an understanding, Lenore. You owe it to me to speak plainly. I say"—and his voice was hoarse with anger—"you don't care for that young upstart, do you?"

"I think you are taking leave of your senses." She spoke coldly and quietly, but the colour rose to her cheek and her eyes flashed.

"The young beggar is interfering everywhere," he said sullenly. He has spoiled my chance of being elected, and he has upset the people's minds. No wonder they got angry with him last night. Serve him right, I say. It would be

a good thing—for everyone, if we were rid of him for ever."

A thrush began to carol in the trees above them. It was not the season when birds sing as blithely as in the spring, but this songster poured forth its song gaily. Instantly her mind flew back to the night when Denis had told her he loved her. She remembered being under the acacia tree ; she remembered how her heart quivered with a joy that was nearly akin to pain. Almost mechanically she looked towards the spot where the mavis was perched, and then she realised that she was now standing under the same tree that overshadowed them then. It all came back to her. His passionate words, the story of the way she had influenced his life, the longings of his heart. And he was lying ill, perhaps dying, at Rathsheen, the old house where Pat O'Hara and his half-savage granddaughter lived. Who was nursing him ? she wondered.

"I mean it," went on Rosscommon, for the look on Lenore's face aroused all that was savage in him, and a desire for revenge mastered him. He's not an Irishman at all. Let him suffer for his interference."

"I say, Stephen"—it was Sir Charles Tyrone who spoke, and a moment later he came up to them—"it's time we were off. There's only just time for us to meet your committee at Connella. By the way, there's worse news about Kildare again. I hear he is delirious, and that his condition is very critical. In fact, the worst is feared."

The two walked away, leaving Lenore alone. For a time she was overwhelmed by the news she had heard ; it seemed to her that somehow she was responsible. She pictured him in a dingy room in old Pat O'Hara's house, while his granddaughter ministered to his needs. Then again the thought of the night which she had been thinking came back to her, when the man who now lay dying told her he loved her. She remembered, too, how weeks later they had walked through the fields together, and she had told him that only on condition he shared her faith could she ever give him her heart.

Then the truth came to her.

She had not loved him—really loved him at that time. She had loved herself. He was to sacrifice his will, his

convictions for hers. But now ! Great God, and he was dying in that lonely old house, believing that he could never be anything to her ! He was dying, and would never know that all the things which had separated them were as nothing compared with the love that swallowed her up in its greatness.

And she could do nothing.

Rathsheen was several miles away, a poor broken-down old ruin. Her father owned a good deal of land around the house, and she had seen it more than once from the distance. And Denis was there—alone, save for the old rebel and his half-savage but wondrously beautiful granddaughter, and she could do nothing.

She remembered their meeting the day before. She had passed him by, never deigning to give him a look. That was her answer to the letter he had written her ; that was her scorn of him for becoming associated with the rebels who would steal their land and ruin the country. And now he was wounded, perhaps to death. If he thought of her, it would be only to remember her as one who sacrificed his love for a political opinion, and yet she would give her life for his. Yes, she could not hide the fact from herself now ; she did not want to ; rather, she found a kind of fierce joy in it.

Scarcely knowing what she did, she took a long walk away among the moors that lay in the distance. She wanted to be away from the haunts of men, to face the facts as they were. Life had been stripped of its draperies ; the bare tragic Truth stood out clearly before her. For hours she walked unceasingly, not returning home till late, and then, telling her mother she did not feel well, retired to her room. Hour after hour she lay thinking—how could she sleep, while Denis Kildare lay ill, perhaps dying, and she could do nothing for him ?

She heard the noise of wheels on the drive. It was her father returning ; perhaps he would have news. Throwing on a dressing-gown, she went down to the hall.

" Is there any more news ? " she asked.

" What, about Kildare ? Yes, I hear he's no worse. The doctor thinks his fine constitution may carry him through."

" Thank you, dad," she said. " I—I couldn't sleep. It

seems so horrible, doesn't it? Of course you will find out who did it, and punish them."

"Impossible; at times like these one would do more harm than good."

The girl went to her room again, while Sir Charles wondered at her being so interested.

Hour after hour she lay awake, thinking, wondering, praying. When she came down to breakfast the following morning her mother had not yet risen, while her father had again left the house on election business. Everyone went about their work as usual. The fact angered her. How could the servants be so impassive, careless, when Denis Kildare was perhaps dying, dead!

"And I can do nothing!" she gasped.

Then her heart gave a wild leap; she caught hold of a chair to keep herself from falling. For two or three minutes the thought which had affected her so seemed pure madness. Then the light of resolution came into her eyes.

Ten minutes later she was on horseback, riding towards Rathsheen. When she came to the broken-down lodge gates her resolution almost failed her. She had always regarded old Pat O'Hara as a rebel who incited people to wild and lawless things; she had heard of his granddaughter as being little better than a beautiful savage; therefore she had looked upon them both as utterly impossible from a social point of view. Under ordinary circumstances she would no more think of visiting the house than of visiting a prison. How could she ask for permission to enter the house of a man who was a danger to the community, and who if the authorities had done their duty in the old days, would have been sent to lifelong imprisonment?

But it was only for a moment. She must know from authoritative sources something about the man she loved. A great impulse had come upon her, and she had yielded.

She rode up to the door and dismounted. The servant who answered her knock would not be favourably regarded by a good housekeeper.

"Is—is Mr. O'Hara in?"

"Sure, no, he's out till noon; but Miss Rosaleen is."

"Can I see her?"

"And who might ye be?"

"Miss Tyrone, of Clonnell."

"Miss Tyrone? Then ye'll be Sir Charles's daughter?"

"Yes."

"And you'd like to see Miss Rosaleen?"

"Yes."

The woman looked at her curiously. She had never seen such a visitor there before. She wondered why she had come. Was it to inquire after young Squire Kildare? But why should she? Biddy McPherson had watched her young mistress closely for some days, and had drawn her conclusions.

"She can't hold a candle to Miss Rosaleen for all her fine clothes," she reflected; then she asked Lenore to enter the house.

"I'll tell Miss Rosaleen," she said; "but faith, and I think it's little time she'll give ye."

Lenore entered the old oak-panelled room, and scrutinised it closely. She felt strangely interested. Why she did not know; but she did.

Biddy found her young mistress. "Sure," she said, "and a young woman, calling herself Mistress Tyrone, is here, and she's wantin' to see ye." Then she added confidently: "Ye needn't fear, Miss Rosaleen; she isn't a patch on ye."

"Miss Tyrone?"

"Yes, miss."

"What does she want?" She spoke almost angrily, and her black eyes burned almost red.

"She didn't tell me. But seein' ye want to know ye'll doubtless go and find out."

Rosaleen went to the room where Lenore was, and the two young girls stood facing each other. Although they had lived in the same district since childhood, and were well known to each other by name, they met as strangers. They had lived in two different worlds; they belonged to two distinct races. No matter who had entered the room at the time could help being struck by the fact. Lenore was tall, well dressed, refined, a perfect representative of aristocratic Ireland. Throughout the whole of her life she had met on terms of intimacy with the land-owning class of both England and the land of her birth. Her sympathies were English rather than Irish, and she had

been taught to regard those who hated England, and who longed for Ireland to be a distinct nation, with a feeling of contempt. Through long years the feeling had prevailed with her class that the Protestant Unionists of Ireland were the cultured, refined people of the country, while the Roman Catholic Nationalists were poor, uneducated, priest-ridden. Of course there were a few old Roman Catholic families, but they were nearly all Unionists.

Rosaleen, on the other hand, was Irish to her finger tips. Her family had been great in Ireland before the Tyrones were ever heard of. And she loved Ireland and all that was Irish with a passionate love. She wore Irish clothes, she adopted the Irish manner of dress.

Both were beautiful, but their beauty belonged to different orders. Lenore's was refined, and somewhat stately; Rosaleen's was the beauty of a wild rose. Lenore was self-restrained, and did not easily give expression to her deepest feelings; Rosaleen was ardent and impulsive. Yet both were children of the same land; in the veins of both was the blood of a warm-hearted race.

And they both loved the same man, and that man lay in the room above, weak and wounded.

Both eagerly looked at each other. Each noted the beauty of the other, and each had a feeling of antagonism. Their pride was equal. The wild flash of Rosaleen's eyes denoted her pride of name and race as much as the quieter gaze of Lenore.

"You are Miss O'Hara?"

"Yes, I am Rosaleen O'Hara; and you are Miss Tyrone?"

"Yes. I came to ask—that is, I heard that Mr. Kildare was ill; that he was here. I came to ask how he was."

"He is better."

"Much better?"

"Yes, much better. Your friends did not kill him."

There was a kind of savage triumph in her tones. She wanted to wound; she wanted to show how she regarded the proud stately girl who stood before her.

Lenore was silent a few seconds. "I am glad he is better," she said. "But what did you mean about my friends? My friends did not harm him."

"It is said that a band of Orangemen came to kill him," said Rosaleen. "They are your friends."

"No; even if what you say is true, which I do not believe, they are not my friends. None of my friends would be guilty of such a thing."

Rosaleen's eyes burned red as she looked at Lenore. All the old race-hatred was in her heart. Lenore belonged to the order who had robbed the O'Haras of their lands and the Irish of their country. In her heart were the feuds of ages."

"Mr. Kildare was our friend," went on Lenore; "he had often visited my father's house. I do not believe in his politics, but I came to see him—that is, to hear news about him."

"You shut your doors on him because he loved Ireland," cried Rosaleen; "you scorned him because he wanted to give his country justice."

"I think we had not better speak of that," said Lenore. "I—I am glad he is better; very glad."

There was a tremor in her voice as she spoke, which Rosaleen was not slow in noting. Throughout the night he was wounded she had been in Denis's room while fever was in the young man's veins, and he had been talking incoherently.

"Your name is Lenore?" The girl spoke hoarsely.

"Yes."

"You love him?"

Lenore's face became as pale as death, and her lips quivered, but she spoke no word. She felt that the girl's great black eyes were upon her; knew that she was looking into her heart.

"Yes, I see you do," and Rosaleen's voice quivered with passion. "That is why you have come here."

For a few seconds there was a silence between them. Neither thought of their difference in race, in sympathy, in religion. The elemental passions in the hearts of both were aroused; because both loved the same man.

"But what is your love worth?" went on Rosaleen scornfully. "You cannot love, really; you are too cold, you are just like a statue. You drove him from your house because he could not repeat your Shibboleth. And you call that love!"

There was a world of scorn in her tones, in the movement of her shoulders.

"You think you love him," went on the girl, and her voice was almost savage, "and yet you wait nearly two days before you come to inquire after him. He might have died. And you call that love!"

By a mighty effort Lenore controlled herself. "I think I had better go," she said. "I am so glad Mr. Kildare is better. Will you please tell him so?"

"Do you wish me to tell him you've called?"

"Yes, please."

"And to tell him you are glad he's better?"

"Yes."

"And is that all?"

"I am afraid I do not understand."

"No, you do not understand. You are too cold; you do not know what love is. If—if I loved, I, whom you look on as a half-savage Irish girl, do you think I'd be willing to go away like that?"

"What would you do?" Lenore was almost carried away by the girl's intensity.

"Do! I would rush to his side. Neither bolts nor locks should stop me. If a hundred people stood around the door forbidding me, I would get to his side."

There was a look of madness in Rosaleen's eyes. For the moment she was one of the old O'Haras who knew nothing of the conventions of modern days.

"You—you do not understand," said Lenore; "he—he—perhaps he is not well enough to see me—he might not want to see me."

Rosaleen was suffering terribly. She was torturing herself by looking at this girl who also loved Denis Kildare. She was jealous of her beauty, jealous of her self-control, of her association with a life to which she was a stranger. She had listened to Denis's wild talk during his hours of unconsciousness, when he knew not what he said, and the remembrance of his words almost drove her mad.

"You do not really love him!" she cried; "you don't, you don't!"

Lenore was silent for a few seconds, then she said, "I will go now. I hope you will forgive me for calling."

Rosaleen would not let her go. She felt she could not.

She wanted to drive her out of the house, out of the country, and yet she felt she must detain her by every means in her power. She had been trying to control herself, but she was almost mad, and in her madness came a kind of savage desire for self-torture. She was going to test this beautiful girl's love; she was going to see if she were in any way worthy of him.

"I tell you, you do not really love him," went on Rosaleen. "You do not know what love means. You are a block of marble. You are as cold as ice. Still, I'm going to give you a chance. You shall prove to me that you love him."

Lenore moved towards the door. It seemed to her as though the beautiful creature were mad.

"No, you must not go yet," cried Rosaleen. "I am —

## CHAPTER XXVI

### ROSALEEN'S VICTORY

"WHAT do you wish ?" said Lenore.

"What do I wish !" cried the other ; "if I told you that, you would be more frightened than you are now. Even I dare not tell you that. But, as I said, I want to prove you ; I want to satisfy myself that—that—no, I will not tell you that."

"I do not understand you," said Lenore. "And I really must go now. I am glad Mr. Kildare is better. Please stand aside that I may return home."

"No, you must not go yet," cried Rosaleen ; "I am not going to let you. I will see if you love him : see if you will brave convention in order to see him."

"See him !"

"Yes, see him. He is in the room above. He is well enough to be seen. The doctor has been here this morning, and says that in a day or two he will be quite well enough to go out again. He is in a sitting-room above, lying on a couch. He has been talking with my grandfather about the election this morning. You can go and see him ; I will take you to him. Come !"

She was torturing herself by every word she spoke, but she felt she could do no other.

Lenore hesitated ; she was almost frightened by the girl's words and by the look that shone from her eyes.

"You love !" and there was infinite scorn in Rosaleen's voice. "He has been right down to the gates of death, and yet you do not dare to go and see him. You fear what people will say ; you fear that it will be whispered in our neighbourhood that Miss Lenore Tyrone visited Denis Kildare in his sick room, in the house of old Pat O'Hara, the rebel, the man who years ago was the leader of the

Young Irish League. Oh, you coward ! What is your love worth ? ”

“ He—he may not want to see me,” said Lenore, remembering their last meeting.

“ But he does, he does ! ”

Still the girl was torturing herself. She loathed the thought of Lenore seeing Denis, but yielding to the strange contradictoriness of her wild Irish nature she took a delight in goading her to do that which she would have given anything to prevent.

Lenore was silent ; something, she knew not what, kept her from speaking.

“ Ah ! ” cried the girl with a savage laugh. “ You think you love him, and yet you are afraid—afraid of a few gossiping tongues ! ”

“ Will you take me to him ? ” replied Lenore quietly. “ I will show you that I am not afraid ; that I do not care what all the world may say.”

“ You love him then ? you confess it ! ”

“ Yes, I love him.”

Rosaleen put her hand to her side ; she thought she was going to fall. She did not know why she had been torturing herself so, except that she wanted to prove to herself that Lenore did not love the man for whom she would willingly die.

“ Come ! ” she said, and like one in a dream Lenore followed her. Although she had kept herself under control, the Irish girl’s intensity had influenced her in a way she could not understand. There seemed a strange power in the young girl’s presence, a power which aroused something in her nature which had been lying dormant.

Together they went up the great oak staircase—the staircase which many generations of O’Haras long since dead had trodden. When they reached the landing Rosaleen stopped.

“ You want to see him alone ? ”

“ Yes,” said Lenore. The word came from her almost in spite of herself. Her heart was beating wildly.

“ But he may not love you—mind that,” whispered Rosaleen. “ You cast him off, and he may not love you now.”

Lenore did not understand what she meant. The excite-

ment under which she laboured was too great for her to understand the workings of the Irish girl's mind. She seemed as one dreaming a strange dream.

Rosaleen knocked at Denis's door.

" May I come in ? " she said. " I have brought some one to see you."

" Yes." It was Denis who spoke.

Rosaleen opened the door and the two girls entered. Evidently Denis was much better. He was fully dressed, and was half sitting, half reclining on a sofa. He had evidently been reading some papers bearing on the election. His face was very white save for two wounds which the doctor had carefully plastered.

He looked eagerly at them, and sat upright.

" Lenore ! " he said.

Rosaleen, her teeth set and her eyes shining with a mad light, left the room, leaving the two together.

For a moment Lenore was unable to speak or move. The sight of Denis, looking so pale and ill, as well as the strange circumstances under which they had met, almost overwhelmed her.

" Lenore ! " cried Denis again, and it seemed to him that all the misery, the turmoil, the excitement of the last few weeks were as nothing.

She came towards him with faltering steps ; then she fell on her knees beside him and burst into tears.

" Denis ! " she said, " forgive me, will you ? "

Rosaleen was as nothing now. All the passionate outpouring of her heart's love was forgotten. It is one of the great tragedies of life, but sometimes a love which is as strong as death is unheeded—treated as though it did not exist. Lenore, the dream of his boyhood, the love of his young manhood, was kneeling by his side. He could even rejoice in his wounds, in his weakness, when it meant so much happiness.

He held out his left hand to her, for his right hand was bandaged. It had been wounded, and he could not move it without pain. She caught it eagerly and held it to her lips.

" I am not worthy, Denis," she sobbed. " But forgive me, forgive me. My heart has been breaking. I love you, love you ! "

" And you have braved everything to come and see me ! "

There was laughter in his voice, heaven was in his heart. He lived only in the present. The past, the future, were as nothing.

"Tell me you will get better," she cried; "tell me you do not suffer. Oh, I have been a coward; I have cared for nothing but myself; but oh, I love you, Denis, I love you!"

The crust of her nature was broken; she was as much the child of impulse now as Rosaleen who had scorned her, and cared as little what the world might say. She had held herself in control all the morning, but the sight of his pale, bruised face had made her forget everything but her love. Even her strange interview with Rosaleen was forgotten. She did not realise where she was, except that she knelt by the side of the man to whom she had given her heart.

For a minute they remained thus: he sitting on an old leather-covered couch, she kneeling at his feet, holding his hand.

"Thank God you've come!" said Denis; "this is a thousand times more than I dared to hope for."

"That Irish girl told me I was too great a coward to come," she said, with a laugh which was half a sob. "She taunted me with being a coward, who was afraid of what gossips might say."

"Who—Rosaleen?"

"Yes; why did she speak in such a strange way? What right had she to taunt me?"

A great black cloud seemed to fall upon him. He had no right to love Lenore now. He had plighted his troth to Rosaleen. Lenore's words awoke in him the recollection of everything. He felt as though he were going mad. The gates of heaven had been open to him, but he had shut them with his own hand. Rosaleen, in spite of her passionate love, in spite of all she had done for him, was nothing to him compared with Lenore, whom he had loved ever since he had known the meaning of the word. But he must tell her to go away. He could not, as an honourable man, be silent in the face of what had passed between him and Rosaleen.

Lenore still knelt beside him. That spirit of abandonment which rarely possesses one completely held sway over her. For months she had restrained herself, but now she could no more help pouring out the story of her heart than a child can help telling its story to a fond mother.

"She does know," she went on. "When I heard of what happened, nothing seemed to matter. Oh, I have been a coward! What are political parties to us, Denis? I love you, even as—as you told me you love me."

"I—I must not love you any more!" His voice was hoarse and unnatural; he felt as though he were digging his own grave.

The girl started up with a look of terror in her eyes.

"I must not love you any more," he repeated; "that is—no, I must not."

"Must not! I do not understand."

"You did not answer my letter. You refused to speak to me, to look at me in the lane. You gave your smile to Rosscommon—the whole countryside said you were betrothed to him—and—and I have given my promise to Rosaleen."

It was a piteous confession to make. He felt ashamed of himself as he made it; but he could not tell her the whole truth. How could he?

Lenore rose to her feet. Her eyes had become hard with shame, and anger, and terror.

"And this is true?"

"It is true. God helping me—it is true."

It was not like Denis's voice at all, but every word was spoken clearly and distinctly. It was impossible to mistake their meaning. Lenore looked at him steadily, and was almost frightened as she saw his face.

She had been subjected to the greatest injury a woman can suffer. She had laid bare her heart; she had laid it at his feet, with the abandonment which rarely possesses a proud woman; she had cast fear and convention to the wind, and had rejoiced in doing so; and he had scorned it.

"Forgive me," she said hoarsely; "I did not know; I did not understand. I will leave you."

Without another word, and unheeding Denis's hoarse cry, she walked to the door and opened it. For a few seconds she could not see where to go; her vision was blurred. Presently she saw Rosaleen.

"You have left him—so soon!"

But Lenore took no heed; she walked down the stairs and out of the house, where her horse was fastened. Rosa-

leen followed her, and there was a suggestion of a savage in her movements.

" You do not love him, and he does not love you. Tell me that ! "

But Lenore spoke no word. She lifted the bridle reins from a crook in the wall, led her horse to the old stepping-stone, and a minute later was galloping furiously down the drive.

A look of triumph shone in Rosaleen's eyes. She had suffered torments in leading Lenore to Denis's side, but now she rejoiced in her act. She had won. Denis was hers ; this stately woman who scorned her was humbled to the dust. Denis had driven her away.

She felt like shouting aloud in her savage joy. She cared nothing for the other's sufferings ; rather, she almost rejoiced in them. How dare this cold statue pretend to love the man who was light and life to her ! Had Denis loved her, she would have hated her even to death ; but now she looked at her retreating form with savage joy and wild triumph shining from her eyes.

But something kept her from going to Denis's side again ; she knew not what. There seemed no reason why she should. The doctor had pronounced him so much recovered as to allow him to leave his bedroom and go to an adjoining sitting-room ; nevertheless, she kept away.

Presently Pat O'Hara came back and made his way to Denis.

" You look pale and ill, my lad," said the old man. " You've had a fair visitor, I've been told. You should look better instead of worse."

" I'm very tired," said Denis. " I would rather not talk if you don't mind. I—I think that later on I shall be rested."

" I saw Father Meharry on my way back ; he wants to come and see you."

" This evening," replied Denis ; " but now—I had better be alone.

Later on in the day Rosaleen came to the room, but she did not stay long. She was very quiet, very subdued. All the mad look of triumph had gone. But she was very gentle, and in her eyes were a look of yearning.

In the evening Father Meharry and Father Flanagan

came to the house, and when Denis heard of their visit he expressed a willingness to see them. His strength had asserted itself again, and there was no sign of fever. His injuries were less serious than had been feared.

" You are sure you are well enough to see us ? " said Father Meharry as he entered the room with Father Flanagan and old Pat.

" Oh, yes, I'm quite well enough," replied Denis. " I hope to be out and around again in a day or two. You see," he added with a smile, " the election has to be fought."

" You mean to fight it to the end, then ? "

" And to victory," said Denis quietly.

" That will never be," said the priest ; " never. But let that pass for the moment. I came to tell you of our grief —our very great grief at what happened."

" That's very kind of you," said Denis.

" Of course people have been talking about it," went on Father Meharry ; " some have accused me and Father Flanagan here of inciting the roughs to treat you as they did. I hope you don't believe that ? "

" No," said Denis, looking into the priest's face, " I do not believe that."

" Thank you," said the priest. " I don't deny that I have been very bitter towards you, and that both Father Flanagan and I, as well as many others, have said some very hard things about you. But we never incited the people to fight you—in that way."

" No," repeated Denis. " I don't believe you did ; that is, not intentionally."

" I wanted to assure you of this, Mr. Kildare," went on Father Meharry. " Mind, I don't hide the fact from you that I've been cruelly disappointed in you. It has been one of the greatest griefs of my life that you, a Kildare, should forsake the faith. You were baptised into the Church, and should be a stronghold to the Church. I tell you, it's awful, awful ! and I've not been slow in saying it."

" No," assented Denis with a smile, " you haven't."

" I hate your politics too. I believe they are of the devil. I would a thousand times rather see Ireland for ever under the heel of England, much as I hate England, than that things should be as you are trying to make them. Ireland

belongs to the Church, Mr. Kildare, and will ever be obedient to the Church. The priests have been the truest friends of the people, and we don't rule over them more than is good for them. What you and Mr. O'Hara here advocate would mean rebellion against the Church. It would mean a false liberty ; it would lead to atheism ; and I mean to fight ye—but not that way," and he pointed to Denis's bruised face. " You don't believe I'm guilty of it either, do you ? " And he turned to old Pat O'Hara.

" Not you, Meharry, nor you, Flanagan," said old Pat ; " that is, not intentionally. But you know what the people are, and how easily they are moved. And you've said some hard things. Besides, I'm not sure that Father Flint and a few like him haven't been glad at what has taken place."

" I know that some of us have felt deeply," said the priest ; " and I don't deny that I denounced Mr. Kildare in many places. I felt it my duty. But I've come to say this : If any words of mine have incited the people to physical violence—well, I'm sorry—there ! "

There was such a ring of sincerity in his voice that Denis could not help feeling kindly towards him. Besides, in spite of the fact that he ruled the people of his parish as though they were children, he believed he was doing the will of God. He had helped them too, and took a deep interest in them.

Denis held out his hand. His heart was very sore ; but the man had moved him in spite of himself. The priest grasped it warmly.

" Oh, Denis Kildare," he said, " my heart bleeds for ye. Come back to the Church, and be forgiven. No one will rejoice as much as I."

Denis was silent. He did not want to wound his feelings, even although he had during the last week or two covered him with abuse. He was sure he was sincere, and there was something in his warm-hearted Irish way of speaking that made him feel very kindly.

" I want to go further," he went on impulsively. " Why need we fight in different camps ? We both love ould Oireland ; we both want to see her free from English rule. Couldn't we join forces ? Oh, Mr. Kildare, you don't know what harm you are doing. The people are children, man ! they need guidance. And who's so fit to guide them as

the priests who've christened the children, helped them in their troubles, buried their dead, and been their friend always? Let us continue to do this, and you join the others of the Nationalist party. If you do this, I don't say but—but Peter Luggan might resign, and—and—”

“No,” said Denis, interrupting him; “it won’t do. I’m a Protestant, Father Meharry, and always shall be. I don’t believe in you priests controlling nearly all the schools in Ireland, and having nearly all the teachers in your power. I don’t believe in the Church controlling, or trying to control, the Parliament in Dublin—if ever we get one. But I needn’t go on. I must stand by my guns.”

A look of anger shot from the eyes of both the priests, but each controlled himself.

“So let it be, then,” said Father Meharry. We must fight, and we shall win. And more, Ireland will always be obedient to the Church. You are fighting an impossible battle, man!”

“No,” replied Denis.

“You think you’ll win?”

“In the long run, yes. I believe in Parnell’s prophecy.”

“What is that?”

“One day he was dealing with the fears of those who said that Home Rule would mean Rome rule. He said: ‘You are afraid that national independence will mean priestly rule. There was never a stupider blunder. The priests might rule an independent Ireland for five years. They would never guide so much as a County Council after that.’”

“And you believe that?”

“I believe it.”

“Parnell died in disgrace,” said the priest; “he died as he deserved to die. I would give up my faith in Home Rule for ever if I believed that.”

“It’s bound to come, nevertheless,” replied Denis; “and with it a free Ireland.”

A little later the priests rose to go. “We are deeply grieved at the course you are taking,” they said; “but we come back to where we started. We are very sorry that you are laid aside in this way, and although we hate your politics we’ll do all we can to stop this kind of thing from happening again.”

Denis shook his head.

" You don't believe it ? " cried Father Flanagan.

" I believe in what you say, but there's a mad spirit in the air. Evil things have been said about me, and although I'm sure you mean all you have said, I am afraid those evil things will bear fruit."

" And you are going on in spite of it ? "

" I hope to be out and at work in a couple of days," replied Denis.

As a matter of fact the way Denis had been treated did not do his cause any harm. He was looked upon as a kind of martyr, and some who had kept in the background openly acknowledged themselves on his side. Indeed, two days before the election it was believed that he would run Peter Luggan very close, if he did not actually win the seat. The sight of the young fellow's pale wounded face aroused tremendous enthusiasm among his followers, while, on the other hand, those who were against him opposed him more bitterly than ever.

On the day before the election he was practically recovered. His right arm, although still painful, no longer needed to be supported by a sling, and while still looking pale and ill he threw himself passionately into the contest. One reason he did this was to try and forget Lenore. He felt that whatever slender chain might have united them before her visit to him, was now broken for ever. She had left him with a look on her face which haunted him day by day, although he tried to forget it. During the two days he had remained at Rathsheen after the visit of the priests, Rosaleen had spent but little time with him. True, she had on several occasions come into the room, and had always been very gentle and kind to him, but she had never made any reference to Lenore's visit. There was no longer a look of triumph in her eyes; rather, she was subdued and thoughtful. Indeed, a great change had come over her. When Denis was talking with her grandfather, she would look at him steadily, as though she wanted to read his heart, but she spoke but little. The old light of gladness no longer shone from her eyes, while her laughter was no longer free and joyous as before.

Still, on the day Denis left Rathsheen and went back to Kildare, she seemed more like the old Rosaleen.

"Sure, and the house will be like a vault without you," she said.

"But I shall come again. I shall come often," he replied.

"And you'll want to come?"

"Of course I shall. How can I help it?"

"You've not spoken to grandfather about—about—you know?"

"Not yet. You told me not to. I am waiting for you to tell me I may."

"Not yet—not yet. I'll tell you when you may."

She kissed him passionately, and held him fast, as though she could not let him go.

"Oh, my love, my love!" she cried; "you'll never know how dear you are to me."

When at length he was gone, however, she sat for a long time alone, thinking.

On the night before the election great meetings were held by all three candidates. Each had arranged to speak at three places in the constituency, and as if by common consent they finished their campaign at Connella. Denis had been fortunate in securing the public hall, and by far the largest crowd came thither.

All through the day he had been nervous and terribly downcast. The fact that favourable reports had come to him concerning his prospects brought him no pleasure. It seemed to him that he was fighting an impossible battle. He felt as he had never felt before that Sir Charles Tyrone and those who thought with him were right. To give self-government to Ireland was to place increased power in the hands of those who controlled the people. This would mean placing his fellow Protestants at the mercy of the Romanists. All his belief in the doctrine that giving the people responsibility and power would cause them to cast aside the chains by which they were bound, seemed to have no foundation in fact. But more than this, he felt as though a dark cloud were hanging over him. There was something in the air which told of a coming storm. A great dread filled his heart; something terrible was going to happen to him.

Still, he doggedly followed the programme which he had mapped out for the day; and as the first meeting he

attended during the evening passed without mishap, he attributed his gloomy forebodings to the nervous shock he had received.

Old Pat O'Hara had arranged to take the chair at the meeting at Connella, and but for the fact that Rosaleen looked pale and ill, he would have been in high spirits.

"What is the matter, my darling?" he said when she came down to breakfast. There were dark rings around her eyes, and she started at every sound.

"Nothing, granddad," she said. "Is—is—Mr. Kildare coming here to-day?"

"I am afraid not. He had a great deal to do."

"Do you think he will win, granddad?"

"I do not say that; but he is making a good fight; and Peter Luggan's party are almost in a panic. They fear he will get in."

"And if he does, do you—that is—will there be any danger of a—a riot?"

"There is always danger of trouble at such a time."

"Granddad, don't let him go to the meeting at Connella to-night." Her voice was hoarse, and there was a look of terror in her eyes.

"Why, my darling?"

"Granddad, do you believe in dreams, in visions, in presentiments?"

Old Pat was superstitious. Although he was an educated man, the superstitious beliefs of many generations were in his veins; all through his life he had breathed the atmosphere of a superstitious people.

"Because," went on the girl, "I had a terrible dream last night. I saw him at the public hall at Connella; I heard the people cheering him, and many told him that he would gain the victory. Then I saw a man with a knife, who rushed to him and stabbed him to death."

"Nonsense, child," said the old man uneasily. "Sure, and you're wanting a doctor."

"I woke screaming," went on the girl, "and was awake for half an hour; then I went to sleep again, and dreamed the same dream. After that I dared not go to sleep again. I kept awake till dawn; then I got up and looked out of the window, and I saw everything I had seen in my dream and—"

"And what, my darling?" asked the old man as she stopped.

"Must he go to Connella to-night?" and her voice was hoarse with fear.

"I am afraid he must. A great deal depends on it."

"Then I am going too."

"No, no; I cannot let you."

But Rosaleen could not be dissuaded. Old Pat used every argument he knew to dissuade her, but nothing could move her. Later in the day she was much more cheerful, and in spite of the haunted look in her eyes the old man hoped that she had got over her foolish fears. During the afternoon she spent a great deal of time in writing, and then as evening came on she went to her room to dress for the meeting.

Never had the old man seen her look so beautiful as she looked that night, and never had he felt so proud of her. She had apparently got over her fears too, for her eyes shone brightly, and laughter was upon her lips.

"You have got over your fears, my darling," he said, as he helped her into the conveyance.

"I was never afraid of an Irish crowd yet," she said; and then she sat quietly during the journey to Connella, never speaking a word.

When they came to the public hall it was crowded.

"There are hundreds who can't get in," said a man to Pat. "It's a tremenjis crowd. You'll just have to hold the fort till Mr. Kildare comes."

When the people saw Rosaleen come in behind her grandfather, a great cheer went up.

"The people are in a good temper, my darling," said old Pat, looking at her proudly; but there was a far-away look in the young girl's eyes, as if she saw something that was invisible to him.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### STRONGER THAN DEATH

As Pat O'Hara had said, the meeting seemed in a good humour. In the main, it was composed of Denis's supporters, although it was evident that there was a good number who were opposed to him. Still, there was no rowdyism, and it was evident that Pat still exercised his old influence over the people. When the old man had finished, John Grubb, the Quaker, moved a resolution, and his quiet, thoughtful manner of speech had a good effect. He said he was not afraid of giving his countrymen the power to govern Ireland. Neither as a Protestant had he any fears that the Roman Catholic majority would oppress or persecute those of a different faith. He had lived nearly all his life at Connella, and had never received anything but kindness from them.

When John Grubb had finished, however, a different feeling was aroused. An Irish farmer, famed for his oratory, was called upon to second the resolution of confidence and support, and was asked to speak for a quarter of an hour, by which time Denis was expected to arrive. The farmer aroused the meeting to a white heat. He declared that Denis had fought the battle gallantly, and had introduced no personalities; his opponents, however, had covered Mr. Kildare with abuse, and in a base and cowardly manner had tried to make it impossible for him to be there that night.

This caused shouts of anger among Peter Luggan's supporters, and more than once Pat O'Hara had to intervene to keep order.

"I don't mind their yells and their squeals," cried the farmer. "Mr. Kildare is going to win, for all the cursings of the black-coated gentry. The day of priest rule is nearly

over in Ireland. I can tell you this : I have the results of a most careful canvass, and Mr. Kildare is going to be returned by a big majority."

At this moment Denis entered the room, and was met with a wild shout. By this time the atmosphere was electric and the audience was at fever heat. Denis was very pale, and looked completely worn out. Still, he spoke with all his old earnestness and power. Once during his speech he turned and saw Rosaleen. Never, he thought, had he seen such a picture of loveliness. Her dark cheeks were flushed with excitement ; her eyes burned with the light of joy. She had listened to his every word with intense interest, and was carried away by the fervour of the meeting. She had forgotten her dreams and her fears : Denis was there before her, the hero of the hour. As he looked at her their eyes met, and it was impossible to mistake the look of love, of joy, of victory on her face. Many in the audience saw the look ; one young fellow especially noticed it, and on his face was the look of a devil.

Denis turned to the audience again. The glad smile on Rosaleen's face was reflected on his own.

"Throughout the day," he said, "I have been depressed ; I have felt that the forces against me would be too strong for us ; but as I stand here to-night and look at your faces, I feel that we shall win."

His words were met by a great roar of applause, so loud it was that the mutterings of many were not heard.

"I want to say this, too," he went on : "if we win, while I gladly recognise the loyal and unfailing service of all who have helped me, our victory will be chiefly owing to our old friend, Pat O'Hara."

Again there was a great cheer ; and then, as the cheer was dying away, someone shouted :

"And Miss Rosaleen."

"Yes, and Miss Rosaleen," he replied, amidst repeated cheers.

"Faith, and wouldn't she be a grand wife for our new member !" cried a yokel who was a cousin to Biddy McPherson, Pat's serving-maid.

Again there was much shouting and laughter, and again many noted the look of love and triumph on the girl's beautiful face.

The meeting closed amidst wild excitement, and Pat, followed by Rosaleen and Denis, found their way to the anteroom.

"It couldn't have gone off better," said Pat; "and now, my lad, the sooner we get home the better."

Outside the side entrance a great crowd gathered. When Pat and Denis appeared there was a shout of delight; but there were many who cursed, and among the latter was the young man whose face had been contorted with passion during the meeting.

The night was dark, and the place was but ill lit.

"I'm going to take you back in my motor," said Denis; "see, it's only a few yards away."

He led the way towards it; then suddenly he saw something gleam before his eyes. In the darkness, too, he thought he saw an evil contorted face, and a great dread laid hold of him. The crowd gathered around him so that he could not move. It seemed to him that the people gossiped him unnecessarily. He felt a blow on his head, and a thousand sparks flashed before his eyes; then he heard a cry, as if of warning. A moment later there was a loud, piercing scream, as someone was hurled violently against him.

"Oh, Denis! Denis!"

It was Rosaleen's voice that he heard above the din and uproar.

"It's Miss Rosaleen! Bring a light! She's hurt, she's hurt!"

A light shone upon them, and he saw Rosaleen lying at his feet, with a knife buried in her breast.

He felt as though his strength was leaving him, while all around him were wild cries—cries of passion, cries of vengeance.

"Stand back!" he said, and as if by magic a space was cleared. He knelt by her side.

"Rosaleen!"

"I saw him trying to strike you," she gasped, "and—and—I cried out. I tried to keep him from you, and—and—you are not hurt, Denis!"

"No, no, I am not hurt; but you—you, Rosaleen?"

He did not know what he was saying; it seemed as if he were sinking in an unfathomable abyss, and it grew

darker each moment. Then he remembered nothing more.

When he awoke to consciousness he was at Rathsheen. A man was sponging blood from his head. Strange, shadowy forms stood around him.

"What has happened?" he asked in a dazed sort of way.

"You are wounded in the head. Someone struck you."

"But—but Rosaleen?" he said, vaguely remembering what had taken place.

"She's in the room above. She rushed between you and your assailant. She had the blow that was meant for you. Whoever it was—had a knife."

"Then—then—"

"Be quiet, Mr. Kildare. Everything that can be done is being done—and—and we hope for the best."

He tried to grasp the meaning of what he had heard, but his mind refused to work. There was a great roaring in his ears, and again darkness enveloped everything.

During the next two days he constantly asked for Rosaleen, but could get no satisfactory replies. That she was very ill he knew, but nothing more. Even if he had been told, his mind was too confused to fully understand anything. His head throbbed violently, his brain was dizzy.

On the third day he was better. His mind was clear again, and everything that had taken place came back to him.

"I am better, doctor," he said, noticing that Dr. Fitzpatrick from Kildare village was by him.

"Yes, you are better. I think you will pull through."

"How is Miss O'Hara?"

The doctor did not speak, but shook his head doubtfully.

"What do you mean, doctor? Tell me quickly."

"She wants to see you."

"To see me! She must be better, then."

"Under ordinary circumstances I should not think of letting you get out of bed; but—but she wants to see you, and see you she shall, whatever happens."

Denis noted the hoarse tones in which the doctor spoke, and a great dread laid hold of him.

"When can I see her?" he asked.

" You must see her at once."

" You mean——"

" I hope it will not do you—that is, I hope you can bear it. But you must prepare yourself for the worst."

" For the worst!"

" For the worst. Come, let me help you into this dressing-gown."

A minute later Denis was leaning on the doctor's arm while he went from his room to the one where Rosaleen lay.

Two nurses were in the room, standing at the foot of the bed. At the head were Pat O'Hara and a priest, one on each side. Rosaleen sat propped up by pillows. When she saw Denis a look of infinite joy came into her eyes.

" You are better! You will get well!" she gasped.

" Yes," replied the doctor, " he is better; he will get well."

Denis came close to her.

" Will you all leave the room," she whispered—" all of you?"

" Yes," said old Pat, after a second's hesitation, " we will all go." He seemed to have aged twenty years since the night of the meeting. His feet dragged heavily, his form was bent.

" Denis, my love!" she said when they were gone, " I wanted to tell you that it's all right—all right. I know everything, my beloved—and—and——"

Denis fell on his knees by the bed.

" You are dying for me," he sobbed.

" Do not grieve," she whispered; " I am very happy—very, very happy. And I do not suffer at all. The pain is all gone. And you will live—you will live."

There was infinite contentment in her eyes.

" It's right as it is," she went on; " I am only a wild, ignorant Irish girl, and—and—but I love you, Denis. I love you more than life!"

" But you must not die, Rosaleen. I cannot bear it."

" It's right for me to go. I could never have made you happy if I had lived. And I saved you, Denis; I saved you. Tell me that."

" But for you I should have been killed. And oh, Rosaleen, I love you, I love you!"

He spoke the truth; he loved her. Not as he loved

Lenore, but as a man might love a younger sister. In that hour he felt that he would have given his life to save hers.

"Thank you," she panted, and a smile played over her features ; "and—and I have proved my love for you, haven't I ? Don't grieve, Denis ; I scarcely felt the pain at all. And *you* are safe, *you* will get well. I can die contented now, because I—I die for you and—Ireland."

For a few seconds they remained thus : she panting out her life on the pillows, he kneeling by her side holding her hand.

"You will win the next election," she went on, "and you will do great things for Ireland. I—I don't matter, but our country needs you. Look, see, they are coming!"

He turned and looked around the room, but could see nothing.

"They are here," she went on : "all the O'Haras who have lived and died at Rathsheen. Oh, but we have been a wild race ! and I—it's best as it is, Denis."

He did not know why, but the room seemed to be full of strange presences. He thought his mind was wandering again ; but he knew that he held Rosaleen's hand in his.

"They are gone again," she went on ; "they've given me the summons. When they came in they were all clothed in black, but when they left they were all in white—all in white. Good-bye, Denis, my love ! "

He seemed as one in a dream. His mind failed to grasp the realities by which he was surrounded.

"You are not going," he gasped ; "you must stay ! "

"No ; I must go ; but I will always watch over you, my love. Kiss me, will you ? "

He lifted himself and kissed her, while she twined her arms around his neck.

"Oh, if it only could have been !" she whispered ; "if it could ; but it could not. I—I should only have been—but never mind, you will live ; and—I—oh, Denis, my beloved, I can die happy now that you are with me ! See, Denis ! See ! "

Again he felt that the room was full of presences, the place was holy.

"Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes,  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.' "

She said the words joyfully, triumphantly. Then Denis gave a loud cry. A great change had come over her ; she breathed with difficulty.

"Help!" he cried.

He heard rushing footsteps, then he felt himself lifted by strong hands ; but although everything blazed with light he knew of nothing that took place.

When he awoke to consciousness again he was as weak as a child. He could scarcely move in his bed. He could hardly lift his hand from the coverlet. But nothing seemed to matter. People came and went, but he did not care. The world was very dark.

By and by things became more clear to him ; he felt stronger. He asked no questions, but he knew that his interest in life had grown stronger.

Day slowly followed day, and life came surging back to him.

"Grandfather," he said one morning, "thank you for coming."

"Yes, my boy, I am come to take you back to your mother's old home. Get strong quickly."

"Thank you, grandfather. I should like to, I think ; but I seem in the dark about everything. Tell me, will you ?"

"Not to day, my dear boy. Dr. Fitzpatrick will not allow me ; but perhaps to-morrow, my boy ; perhaps to-morrow."

There was a world of tenderness in the old man's voice. It was very good to have him there.

The next day Denis was much stronger. His mind was clear again. He noticed that he was alone with his grandfather. He wanted to ask him if Lenore had sent to inquire about him ; but he could not : he was afraid.

"Rosaleen?" he said ; then he went on, as if recalling something : "Yes, I know, I know!"

"She was buried a week to-day," said old Anthony Trevelyan.

"And Pat? Why has he not come to see me? But of course not. He must be broken-hearted."

"He was buried with Rosaleen the same day—in the same grave."

For some seconds Denis was silent. He understood.

"Yes, yes; better so," he said presently. "I was afraid he'd go mad; that he would do something terrible. I know he would try to find the man who murdered her, and kill him."

"A young farmer named Flaherty was found in his stable the night when—that is, the night of the meeting. He was dead. A knife was in his heart."

"It was he, and he killed himself," said Denis. "I know he loved Rosaleen—yes, I see, I see."

For a long time there was a silence. There was no need of further words. Life seemed very black, and yet even at that dark hour the thought of Rosaleen's love brought him joy. It made everything sweeter, purer.

"Sir Charles Tyrone and his family have gone to England," went on old Anthony Trevelyan presently.

"To England?"

"Yes."

He asked no further question. It seemed to him he had no right.

"You have not asked a word about the election," said Anthony, after another silence.

"No; of course that was a foregone conclusion. Peter Luggan was elected."

"Yes; but only by a majority of ten votes over you."

"And Rosscommon?"

"Oh, he was almost a negligible quantity. I have forgotten how many he polled; but only a very few."

He remembered Rosaleen's words. "You will win the next election," she had said.

"Rosscommon has gone on a long sea voyage," said old Anthony meaningly. "It is said that he's gone to Australia."

"And when did—that is, Sir Charles Tyrone go to England?" he asked, after another silence.

"He went yesterday," said old Anthony. "Ah, there is the doctor coming, and you have talked enough for to-day."

During the next few days many came to inquire after him. Some of them were admitted into his room. One of these was John Grubb, the Quaker. They talked together about many things, but never once did the Quaker refer to the result of the election until just before he was leaving.

"You fought a good fight, friend," said John.

"Seemingly in vain," replied Denis, almost bitterly.

"In vain!" said John; "nay, friend. It was a wondrous victory. The whole district for many miles around will never be the same again."

"I don't understand you."

"You have sown the seeds of truth, Friend Kildare. Those seeds will bear fruit. You have set the people thinking. They are talking as they never talked before. It may mean years, but this election is to me the promise of a new Ireland. The morning has not yet broken, but there is a light in the eastern sky. If even thee hadst died that night, my friend, the election would have been a blow for liberty."

"It seems strange that I should be here at Rathsheen, doesn't it?" said Denis presently.

"Hast thou not been told?" said John Grubb.

"What do you mean?"

"Friend Patrick had left the house and the land to Rosaleen. It is but little, but it was all he had to leave."

"Naturally," said Denis; "but still I don't understand you."

"Rosaleen gave everything to thee, Friend Kildare," said John Grubb. "I signed the will. I thought thee knew."

Before he left for England Denis visited the little graveyard near the Roman Catholic church. He quickly found Rosaleen's grave, and he stayed there a long time, while curious eyes watched him, but no man dared to speak to him when he left. They were afraid.

It was late in October when Denis started for Trevelyan Manor with his grandfather; he was still ill and weak, so weak that he had to be almost carried from the train to the boat at Rosslare, and he looked more dead than alive as he sat on a deck-chair and watched the receding shores of Ireland. Dr. Fitzpatrick had strongly urged that he was altogether too ill to think of taking such a journey. Perhaps he remembered that he had endangered Denis's life by allowing him to see Rosaleen so soon after he had received such a terrible wound on the night of the meeting. He knew, too, that Rosaleen's death had been a terrible shock to him, and that for days after he had despaired of his life. Still, Denis had so strongly insisted on leaving Ireland that

he was afraid he would be doing more harm than good if he absolutely forbade him to go.

Although it was October the day was gloriously warm and fine, and so he was able to sit on the deck without danger. Old Anthony Trevelyan sat near by and watched him, and wondered of what he was thinking.

It was scarcely six months since Denis had first gone to Kildare, but it seemed to him as though years had passed, and he knew that the world would never be the same to him again. Since that bright morning in May, when he had first caught the glimpse of the Irish shore, many things had happened. He remembered what dreams he had as the vessel drew near Rosslare ; he called to mind what at the time seemed a call from God. What could he do for Ireland ? Well, what he had tried to do was only a beginning, and he wondered what the future might bring forth. His whole outlook concerning his country had changed ; that which he had once feared now seemed to him a necessity.

He thought of his dreams concerning Lenore and the dark-eyed beauty who had contended with her. In one sense it seemed vague and meaningless, but in another it had been prophetic of the future. He had found Lenore, and he had seen Rosaleen. And Rosaleen was dead. She had loved him with a love that was stronger than death. She had given her life for him. His heart was sore as he thought of it. She, the wild, beautiful Irish girl, lay beneath the cold sod. He had never loved her as he loved Lenore, nevertheless her death had made him old before his time. Rosaleen, the spirit of young Ireland, had changed his life, and she was dead. She had died for love of him.

As for Lenore, he had never seen her since that day when she told him she loved him. Oh, the bliss of that moment !—a bliss followed by dark despair. And she had left him alone. All the dreams of his boyhood had come terribly true. She had come very near to him, and then he had lost her. He felt sure he should never see her again ; his visions were prophetic of the dark future.

When he arrived at Trevelyan Manor, an old house a few miles from Bude, he was so ill that his life was again despaired of, and it was not until well on to the middle of November that he had regained even a suggestion of his

former strength. But he did not seem to trouble ; indeed, he appeared to have no interest in anything. Old Anthony Trevelyan, who day by day grew fonder and prouder of him, in vain tried to arouse him, but he remained apathetic, indifferent to everything.

"I hear that Peter Luggan is by no means popular in Connella," he said to him one day. "John Grubb tells me that you will have no difficulty in being returned at the next election."

Denis shuddered as he shook his head.

"I dare not," he said. "Ireland seems to be the grave of all my hope."

"Nonsense, my lad ; you are but a boy yet. You say your convictions are unshaken. You must fight for them."

"I dare not," he said ; "my strength is gone, my nerves are shattered ; what I once hoped for seems to mock me." And old Anthony sighed, as he saw how pale and tired he appeared.

During the following Christmas season the woman he had called his Aunt Keziah came to see him, but although she pleaded hard with him she could not persuade him to come and see her at the old farmstead where he had been so happy years before.

Only once during the winter was he aroused, and that was when Sir Charles Tyrone came to visit his grandfather. These two men had met more than once when the latter had visited Ireland during Denis's illness, and being in the neighbourhood Sir Charles had paid Mr. Trevelyan a visit.

"I am sorry to see you so ill," said Sir Charles, and Denis thought his manner was cold and constrained.

"I'm getting stronger, I think," replied Denis, "but my strength seems to come back slowly."

"You've had time for reflection since you came here, though," said the baronet. "You see now what a hopeless battle you fought, how futile were all your fancies."

In spite of himself his spirit of antagonism was aroused, and old Anthony Trevelyan was delighted to see the light of battle in his eyes.

"You espoused an impossible cause," went on Sir Charles, who had grown more and more bitter towards the idea of self-government for his country. The priest in Ireland

is almost almighty ; and to give what is called Home Rule is to place us all entirely at the mercy of Rome. God save us from that ! ”

This led to a long argument, to which Anthony Trevelyan listened eagerly, not so much because he was interested in the subject, but because it aroused his grandson from his apathy.

“ At least my experiences in Ireland have taught me that the country is governed by Rome now,” cried Denis at length, “ and the only thing that can destroy priestly control is an independent manhood that will be aroused by free institutions.”

“ Pure nonsense ! ” cried the baronet ; “ why, think of your own experiences during the election. Personally I’d give my life to save Ireland from Home Rule.”

“ And yet I am informed that the fight which ended so disastrously for me,” said Denis, “ has meant a great deal for the district. It is freely said that the people are beginning to think for themselves. That shows what the dissemination of ideas can do. Give Ireland self-government, and in five years the power of priestly dominion will be broken for ever.”

“ Say twenty,” said Sir Charles presently.

“ And if it will take twenty,” cried Denis, “ is it not worth fighting for, suffering for ? As for Roman Catholics persecuting Protestants because they are Protestants—you know it is unkind to hint at it.”

“ This I will say,” said Sir Charles at length : “ you have made me see that a man may be a Home Ruler, and still be a patriot and a Protestant.”

Denis longed to ask after Lenore, but he dared not. He remembered the look in her eyes when they had last met. He gathered that she was staying with some friends in Staffordshire, but where he did not know. She had sent him no message and had made no inquiries concerning him.

Spring found Denis still in Cornwall. He grew to love the old home of his mother, and as he could not bear the idea of returning to Ireland he continued to stay at Trevelyan Manor. As the days lengthened, moreover, old Anthony rejoiced to see his strength coming back ; and when towards the end of April he announced his

intention of visiting John and Mary Tregony, he was led to believe his grandson would soon be himself again.

Only a year had passed since Denis had visited the home of his boyhood, but it seemed strange to him. He felt restless too, and apprehensive. He found in his bedroom the volume of Edgar Allan Poe's poems which had been given him on leaving school, and as he turned over its pages the mad genius exercised his old influence. Yes, there were the lines that fired his imagination years before—

"Tell this soul, by sorrow laden, if within some distant Aiden  
It shall clasp a radiant maiden, clasp a rare and radiant maiden,  
Whom the angels name Lenore ?  
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"

The words sounded like a death-knell as he read them ; nevertheless, the next day he saddled a horse and rode towards Truro, with the determination that he would sail down the broad bosom of the Fal towards the sea. Again he found the tide so low that he had to go on to Malpas, where he saw the *Queen of the Fal* waiting for passengers.

He stood by the roadside and looked intently at the boat. Although he had no hope that such a thing could be possible, he found himself looking for Lenore.

"Of course it's madness," he said to himself ; "she is hundreds of miles away.

Still, he went towards the gangway, as if drawn by an irresistible force. A few minutes later the little boat was steaming gaily down the river, while Denis looked towards the woods, which were fast becoming green, and which stretched down close to the water's edge. It was another such day as that day of days, although the summer was not so far advanced. Then he was a boy, and scarcely knew what sorrow meant, although his heart was filled by strange longings. Now he was a man who had gone far down in the valley of the shadow of death. But the beauty of the river had not changed ; it was only he who had changed. Then life seemed full of visions of hope, then nothing seemed impossible, but now—

He could not believe his own eyes. He believed that his mind was wandering—that he was the victim of a mocking hallucination. Standing a few yards away was the one woman in all the world to him.

Their eyes met. He saw the colour mount her cheeks, and then they became ashy pale.

Forgetful of everything, and scarcely realising what he was doing, he took a step towards her, holding out his hands.

"Lenore!" he cried.

At that moment the boat began to draw up to a little jetty, while someone shouted:

"King Harry's Ferry."

For a few seconds he stood looking at her, his heart beating wildly. She had not spoken to him, even though he had called her by name, but he saw that her lips were quivering, that her hands were trembling. Only a few people were on the boat; no one seemed to be noticing them; but he wanted to be alone with her.

"There's a beautiful lane just above the cottage there," he said; "it is full of wild flowers at this time of the year—and—and there's a wonderful view of the river. Will you not come?"

Without a word she went with him, and neither of them spoke as they watched the *Queen of the Fal* continue her voyage. There seemed nothing to say.

Slowly they mounted the hill; two children passed them, but neither was aware of it. The birds were carolling their love songs, and all the earth was speaking of resurrection.

"I never dared to hope I should see you," he said presently; "but I could not help coming; I wanted to be—where I saw you first."

No one was near; even if there had been, they would not have known. They two were the world.

"Oh, Denis!"

He looked at her and saw the lovelight in her eyes. Heaven was in his heart again. There were many things he did not understand; but it did not matter.

"Do you mean—that, Lenore?"

In another instant they were in each other's arms, and she was sobbing out her joy on his breast.

I who write this have seen joy and sorrow. I have seen the sun of life reach its meridian and move towards the west. I have known the joy of youth, and the strength of youth,

and I know, too, the bitterness of loss and frustrated hopes. I have felt the cruel hand of sickness. I have felt the joy of battle; the joy, too, of conquest, as well as the pain of defeat. Life is very great and wondrously beautiful to those who believe that the great God who is behind all and in all, is Love, infinite Love. But is there in the life of any man anything more beautiful, more holy, is there any joy more pure, than that which comes from the first kiss of the undefiled love of a youth and his maid? Does not that love reveal the mystery of that Eternal Love which is beyond speech and thought?

"I want to tell you something. It is right that you should know," he said presently.

"Is it about Rosaleen, Denis?"

"Yes."

"I do not wish you to tell me. I know. She told me. She wrote me a letter the day that—oh, I know all. I went to see her when she lay dying. She told me everything."

"I never knew."

"She did not wish you to know—until I told you."

He was silent for a time. There seemed no need for speech.

"I have been wanting to tell you this for months," she said presently, "only—I think I was afraid. But I knew you were coming to Cornwall, and I came too. Father is staying at Truro, and—and I came here. Somehow I felt sure you would come."

They walked along the quiet lane, side by side. The birds continued to carol, the air was pure and undefiled; heaven was in their hearts.

"I must go back to Ireland soon," he said presently.

"Yes, Denis. Your work is not done there yet."

He looked at her steadily. He did not understand what she meant.

"I never realised what the people of Ireland felt till—till the time when Rosaleen lay dying. She opened my eyes. I know now that Ireland must be free before she can be saved. There is a great battle to be fought, Denis, and you must be there to lead the people in the fight."

"And you will go with me, and help me?"  
"I will go anywhere with you," she laughed.

Sir Charles Tyrone comes often to Kildare Castle to see his daughter and his son-in-law, of whom he is very proud, although he hates his political views.

"You and your people are hastening the ruin of your country, Denis," he says repeatedly; but he no longer says this with bitterness; neither does he say it with the same conviction that he said it during the time when Denis first fought for the Connella Division. Indeed, I believe he looks forward to the time when his son-in-law will be a great power in the life of Ireland.

"After all, he is a Protestant and a patriot," he reflects; "and his ideals, although they are of course impossible, are doubtless very fine."

Rathsheen is uninhabited, save that the servants who lived there in old Pat O'Hara's days still call it home, and the gardens and lawns are kept trim and beautiful as they were in the days when Rosaleen loved to tend the flowers.

In the little graveyard not far from the gates of Rathsheen is a stone erected to the memory of the old Irishman and his granddaughter. Beneath Rosaleen's name are the words

HER LOVE WAS STRONGER THAN DEATH







